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Standard
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JONATHAN V. LAST

HOT PURSUIT

KENNETH ANDERSON
on religion and politics

JEFFREY BELL
on social conservatism

FRED BARNES
on McCain's last stand

STEPHEN F. HAYES
on Huckaplomacy

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BPA INTERNATIONAL

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The Arctic Freezes Over

The Scrapbook, being conservative, admits to a general aversion to change, which is why we were so distressed to learn of the massive, record-setting decline in Arctic sea ice this summer. You may recall the media's extensive coverage of the melting. In the space of just two weeks this fall, the *New York Times* alone published four stories devoted to the "severe retreat of Arctic ice," one of which warned of the "grim outlook for polar bears." (Ever measured in its reporting, the *Times* did append one caveat to its breathless coverage of the damage global warming has done to the fragile Arctic ecosystem—"Sea ice around Antarctica has seen unusual winter expansions recently, and this week is near a record high.")

Now as the winter solstice fast approaches, sea ice is again back in the news. Professor Wieslaw Maslowski told the American Geophysical Union last week that previous models had grossly underestimated the warming of the Arctic—his team now predicts that as soon as 2013 the North Pole may see its first ice-free summer. As one professor from Cambridge explained the Maslowski announcement, "the loss this year will precondition the ice for the same thing to happen again next year, only worse." Maybe. All of these models are based on less than 30 years of data—satellites only began surveying the Arctic in 1979. Still, we're learning more about the complex climate of the earth all the time.

In an oddly underreported story, according to the NASA Earth Observatory, the Arctic set another record this fall. In late October and early November, the Arctic Ocean saw 58,000 square miles of ice formed per day for 10 straight days—a record rate of *growth* in sea ice. As NASA explained, "Record sea ice growth rates after a record low may sound surprising at first, but it is not completely unexpected. The more ice that survives the summer melt, the less open water there is for new ice to grow."

That makes sense, but The Scrapbook is wary of all the newfangled technology upon which these observations are based. We prefer boots on the ground. Last March, Ann Bancroft and Liv Arnesen, two renowned polar explorers, set out for the North Pole to raise awareness and document the threat from global warming. Unfortunately, their trip came to an abrupt end when Arnesen suffered severe frostbite in temperatures that fell to 100 degrees below zero. At the time, Ann Atwood, who helped organize the expedition, explained to the Associated Press that "they were experiencing temperatures that weren't expected with global warming. . . . But one of the things we see with global warming is unpredictability."

Indeed. Time for a drink to sort this all out. On the rocks. ♦

What He Was Thinking

OMANI AND SAUDI RULERS WITH IRAN'S AHMADINEJAD ON DECEMBER 3. AP PHOTO

T.S. Eliot in Kabul

Reading the latest issue of *Sewanee Review* last week, The Scrapbook was idly perusing an essay about *Time at War*, a memoir of World War II by Nicholas Mosley, the British novelist and son of the British Union of Fascists leader, Oswald Mosley. The author of the review was George Garrett.

One sentence, in particular, jolted us out of our reverie: "Mosley and his company commander . . . regularly quote lines from the poetry of T.S. Eliot," writes Garrett. "Hard to imagine that happening in downtown Baghdad or Kabul."

How's that again? The Scrapbook has no doubt that the British Army officer corps of six decades ago had its share of old classicists and aspiring literary men, but by what authority does

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(Classic Steiner, reprinted from our issue of July 19, 1999)

Garrett assume that appreciation for T.S. Eliot is "hard to imagine . . . in downtown Baghdad or Kabul"? None whatsoever. Which, of course, doesn't stop him from adopting that snide, offhand, dismissive tone about U.S. soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan that is, we suspect, all too common in America's faculty lounges.

On page 40 of this issue, Mark Bauerlein of Emory reviews *Soldier's Heart* by Elizabeth Samet, a moving account (by a West Point professor) of the experience of teaching literature-hungry cadets at the U.S. Military Academy. As Bauerlein makes clear, the interest of these future officers in prose, poetry, and drama is authentic, and profound. "Literature, history, and philosophy matter," he writes, "and they do so less to students and teachers in the cozy quads of the college campus, ensconced in libraries and symposia, than they do to bedraggled, bored, and anxious officers sweating it out in the desert."

Or, put another way, The Scrapbook would bet on the erudition of the American officer corps any day, and would hardly be surprised to hear T.S. Eliot—and Pope, Dickens, or Wallace Stevens—quoted in downtown Baghdad or Kabul. ♦

Not Another Day

It's been a while since we've come across a review as crushing as Brian Lowry's in *Variety*. The critic had the pleasure of skewering the televised adaptation of Mitch Albom's *For One More Day*. And we take pleasure just in reading the opening paragraph:

"'Oprah Winfrey Presents Mitch Albom's *For One More Day*'—this latest ABC movie blessed by daytime's queen should deliver in the ratings and buttress Albom's reputation as one of our foremost purveyors of cultural baby food. Even sappier than the author's teeth-rotting *The Five People You Meet in Heaven*, Albom has drifted from *Tuesdays With Morrie* to *One More Day With Mommy*, delivering another fuzzy lecture about family and spiritual uplift. A wannabe three-hankie affair, it's mostly enough to make you wish he'd stuck to sportswriting." ♦

They Don't Like Ike

All men's deaths diminish us, even the demise of Ike Turner, the rhythm 'n' blues pioneer and byword for domestic violence, show-biz style. But The Scrapbook must salute our friends at the *New York Post*, whose headline of genius about this tragic event deserves its place alongside other classics—"Hix Nix Stix Pix," "Ford to City: Drop Dead"—of the journalistic art. By skillfully combining wit, context, information, and editorial comment, some unsung editor on the *Post* copy desk earns our undying gratitude, and envy. ♦

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Casual

The Books of Christmas

The Christmas Almanac and *The Little Big Book of Christmas*. *Uncle John's Bathroom Reader Christmas Collection* and *The Kingfisher Book of Classic Christmas Stories*. *A Child's Christmas in Wales* and *Christmas Stories by Charles Dickens*, for that matter: I've never quite understood why people give Christmas books for Christmas.

I mean, by the time you've actually gotten the book—and gone to church, and drunk the eggnog, and eaten the dinner, and cleaned up the wrapping paper, and squabbled with your sister, and blown out the candle stubs—Christmas is pretty much done for the year. All those endless seasonal volumes piled up like the Step Pyramid of Djoser down at the local Barnes & Noble: They really exist to gin up Christmas spirits of their givers, rather than their receivers.

Of course, since gift-givers tend to be the actual purchasers of Christmas presents, it makes a certain financial sense for publishers to concentrate on what inspires them, rather than what the incidental gift-getter might want to read. Which is probably why Amazon.com lists 1,271 books printed this year with the word Christmas in the title. From *An Affair Before Christmas* (a bodice-ripper in which the devilishly attractive Duke of Fletcher is determined to win back his beguiling bride's delectable affections) to *Shall I Knit You a Hat?* (a Christmas yarn in which Mother Rabbit knits Little Rabbit a hat to show off his long, beautiful ears), there's something in print for even the most jaded giver.

What the victims of these gifts think is another matter. I know it's only once a year, but that still seems a poor excuse for clogging up a man's bookshelves every twenty-fifth of December. Look, there are plenty of great stories out there for putting you in the Christmas mood. If it's a little Yule comedy you want, try William Dean Howells's droll "Christmas Every Day" or Siegfried Lenz's slapstick "A Risk for Father Christmas." I've always had a soft spot for Sophie Swett's utterly sappy "How Santa Claus Found the Poor-House," but in a pinch I can make do with O. Henry's perfectly constructed tearjerker "The Gift of the Magi." Damon Runyon's "The Three Wise Guys" will never let you down—to say nothing of the Gospel of Luke, chapter two.

DARREN GYGI

But the time for reading all these stories comes in the days before Christmas, the fast run of Advent. Once Christmas has rolled around, it's gotten a little late for visions of sugar plums to dance in our heads. In fact, the real quiet time, the not-a-creature-stirring moment, isn't the night before Christmas. It comes the next evening, the night of Christmas itself, when finally everything calms down and there's room to look at all the real books—from the aunts and uncles, the grandparents, the cousins, the family friends—that used to blizzard our Christmases when my sisters and I were young.

I'd build a bulwark on the bed and, book by book, browse them all. Zane Grey and Lord Dunsany. H.G. Wells and Arthur Conan Doyle. Dickens, always Dickens. Robert Louis Stevenson. The actual Christmas books—I remember *The Golden Book of Christmas Tales* in there somewhere, and *The Birds' Christmas Carol*, a soppy 1886 classic by Kate Douglas Wiggin—always came from our non-bookish friends and were politely but determinedly set aside on Christmas night. That was the time for *R Is for Rocket*, and *Mr. Midshipman Hornblower*, and *Kim*, and *The Kid Who Batted 1.000*, and *The Count of Monte Cristo*.

I remember the slick feel of the purple dust-jacket on *Journey to the Center of the Earth*, already sliding off the book on that first Christmas reading. I remember tearing through *Cannery Row* and *Catcher in the Rye* because the paperbacks had such vivid covers I figured they had to be as good as *Shane* and *Podkayne of Mars*. They weren't.

Those books had almost a taste and a texture—mostly from that irreproducible new-book smell: like slippery elm, maybe, or vanilla; a pulpy, woodbark scent, compounded with linen and glue and black ink gall into a kind of oddly aged freshness, old and new at the same time. There was *The Lord of the Rings* when I was ten or eleven: three fat paperbacks in a box that ripped the first time I took them out. And there was *Homer Price* when I was six: an oversized, illustrated hardback, like a toddler's first steps out of picture books. And there was *Freddy the Pig* and *The Wind in the Willows* and *Ivanhoe* and *A Canticle for Leibowitz* and on and on.

They always seemed to smell like an impossible abundance in the midst of a cold winter. They smelled, in truth, like Christmas.

Joseph Bottum

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The Value of Nonprofits

John J. DiIulio Jr. is a distinguished social science researcher who has challenged conventional wisdom in his field. So it was surprising to read his December 10 article ("Nonprofits Without Honor") proposing to deny tax-exempt status to nonprofits unless they "predictably and reliably produce significant nonmember benefits." This proposal, among its other flaws, would jeopardize the existence of independent, privately funded research institutions that are exploring politically or culturally unfashionable lines of inquiry. It would also endanger the philanthropic foundations that finance such work.

Current law gives substantial freedom to donors and nonprofits to define their charitable objectives, so long as they fit within general categories of charitable activity. DiIulio's proposal would instead require that each individual nonprofit be ascertained as producing benefits for society by a governmental or quasi-governmental body.

Who would have the power to enforce this subjective standard? The Internal Revenue Service? A new regulatory agency for charities and foundations? Political authorities such as the White House, mayors, and state attorneys general? Or a new set of accreditation agencies, possibly modeled after the regional accreditation monopolies for colleges and universities? In each of these cases, it is easy to see how the freedom and philosophical diversity of research and other charitable institutions would be at risk.

Adam Meyerson
Washington, D.C.

John J. DiIulio Jr. responds: I do not want to put myself or Adam Meyerson or anyone else in the nonprofit research field out of business. I do, however, want us all to do real empirical research that enables us to calculate the diverse public benefits and subsidies enjoyed by tax-exempt organizations, including personal favorites (mine are religious and research ones). I want to "consider" and recommend (I made no definite proposals, but I hope to do so in due course) whatever reforms, sub sector by sub sector, seem both public-spirited and prudent. The status quo alternative is an odd one indeed for conservatives to defend without reflection.

Good for Google

How does Google's effort to digitize 32 million books and make snippets of copyrighted text searchable on the Internet, as described by Jonathan V. Last in "Google and Its Enemies" (December 10), differ from the public library other than in the

technology employed? A person can stroll into a public library, read a few words, pages, or chapters of a book or borrow and read the entire volume without paying the author to consume his product of labor.

Google aims to collect money by selling advertising space on its search-result web pages. Librarians collect salaries for organizing books on shelves to make them more easily retrievable and by checking out books to holders of free library cards. With both libraries and Google, money changes hands in connection with open access to intellectual property whose owners, the authors, receive no compensation save the residuals paid on the one time purchase of books that may inform and entertain scores of consumers each. Does it matter to the authors standing empty-handed on the sidelines whether their books enrich librarians or Google shareholders?

Earl Bohn
Ben Avon, Penn.

Giuliani and Judges

Rudy Giuliani has been linked to the concept of strict construction of the U.S. Constitution in consecutive issues of The Weekly Standard. Matthew Continetti's "Rudy Giuliani, Disciplinarian" (November 26) permits Giuliani to give full vent to his so-called strict constructionist approach to constitutional interpretation, but Continetti does not press Giuliani on the obvious contradiction implied by his tolerance of *Roe* v. *Wade*.

Terry Eastland's editorial "200 Reasons Why the Election Matters" (December 3) correctly states the nature of the contradiction between *Roe* and strict construction but incongruously does so in the context of Giuliani's call for strict constructionist judges. While I applaud that call, someone should point out to Giuliani that a strict constructionist, if he has any intellectual scruples, cannot support *Roe* v. *Wade*. It is the very touchstone case of the "living Constitution" line of reasoning.

William P. Rudland
Greensboro, Ga.

Correction

Stephen Moore's "Through the Roof!" (December 17) incorrectly attributed to Wisconsin governor Jim Doyle support for a universal health care plan funded with a payroll tax surcharge. The plan was backed by the state's Senate Democrats but not by the governor.

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the weekly Standard

Time to Move On . . . From Hillary

The defining moment of the Democratic presidential campaign so far came during the *Des Moines Register* debate, December 13, at 2:10 P.M. Central time.

Q: Senator Obama, you have Bill Clinton's former national security adviser, State Department policy director, and Navy secretary, among others, advising you. With relatively little foreign policy experience of your own, how will you rely on so many Clinton advisers and still deliver the kind of break from the past that you're promising voters?

OBAMA: Well, the—you know, I am . . .

CLINTON (interrupting): [cackle] I wanna hear this [more cackling]

OBAMA: Well, Hillary, I'm looking forward to you advising me, as well.

As are we all. What we are not looking forward to is the prospect of Hillary Clinton in the spotlight, as the Democratic nominee. She might be easier to beat than Barack Obama or John Edwards. She might take positions that are a little less distant from this magazine's views than Obama or Edwards. But the last few weeks have reminded us—and, we suspect, many other Americans—how little we should want the Clintons back on the center stage of American politics.

First there was Bill Clinton, campaigning for his wife in Iowa, claiming falsely—manifestly and provably—that he had "opposed Iraq from the beginning." Can't we move on from rewriting history for the self-aggrandizement of the perennially needy former president?

Then there was the Hillary campaign press release attacking Obama for saying he hadn't spent his whole life planning to run for president (unlike some other candidates). No! Das Hillary Apparat unearthed one Iis Darmawan, 63, "Senator Obama's kindergarten teacher [in Indonesia]." She recalled that little Barack had written an essay in kindergarten, "I Want to Become President." Gotcha!

This is not a joke. The Clinton campaign put out a press release on December 2 trumpeting this discovery. One notes, with open-mouthed wonder, the brazenness of Hillary Clinton's criticizing someone else for ambition. One marvels at the mind-boggling triviality of this particular nugget mined by the legendary Clinton research operation. One also, incidentally, asks: Do kids actually write "essays" in kindergarten? About becoming president of the United States? In Jakarta? Can't we move on from ridiculous Clintonian attacks?

The following week, the national co-chairman of the Clinton campaign, Bill Shaheen, raised the issue of Obama's youthful drug use. Shaheen's wife, Jeanne, is the former governor of New Hampshire and is running for the Senate next year. Bill Shaheen is an experienced operative. This was no young volunteer shooting his mouth off.

Shaheen wondered aloud to a reporter how vulnerable Obama would be to Republican attacks over Obama's long-acknowledged youthful drug use: "It'll be, 'When was the last time? Did you ever give drugs to anyone? Did you sell them to anyone?'" An outcry forced Shaheen to apologize, and to step down as campaign co-chairman the next day. But that evening, on *Hardball*, Clinton strategist Mark Penn pulled a classic Clinton gambit, raising the issue again while denying he was doing so: "The issue related to cocaine use is not something that the campaign was in any way raising," he assured one and all. Penn has been under pressure from critics within Hillary-land who've been trying to mount a coup against him. With this low blow, he presumably was trying to prove to Hillary and her long-time apparatchik Sidney Blumenthal his willingness to go the extra mile. We'll see if throwing personal decency overboard for the sake of the cause saves his job.

Hillary forecast this series of assaults on December 2: "Well, now the fun part starts," she said. "We're going to start drawing a contrast, because I want every Iowan to have accurate information when they make their decisions." The question became whether Obama was tough enough to stand up to it. His demolition of her at the *Des Moines Register* debate suggests he is. The "fun part" for the rest of us will be watching the bitter infighting among the Clintonistas as the wheels come off Hillary's campaign.

It will be good for the country to be able to move on, sooner rather than later, from the Clintons and their brand of politics. If the Democratic primary electorate brings this about, THE WEEKLY STANDARD will be first to say something we are not accustomed to saying to the Democratic party—thank you.

—*William Kristol*

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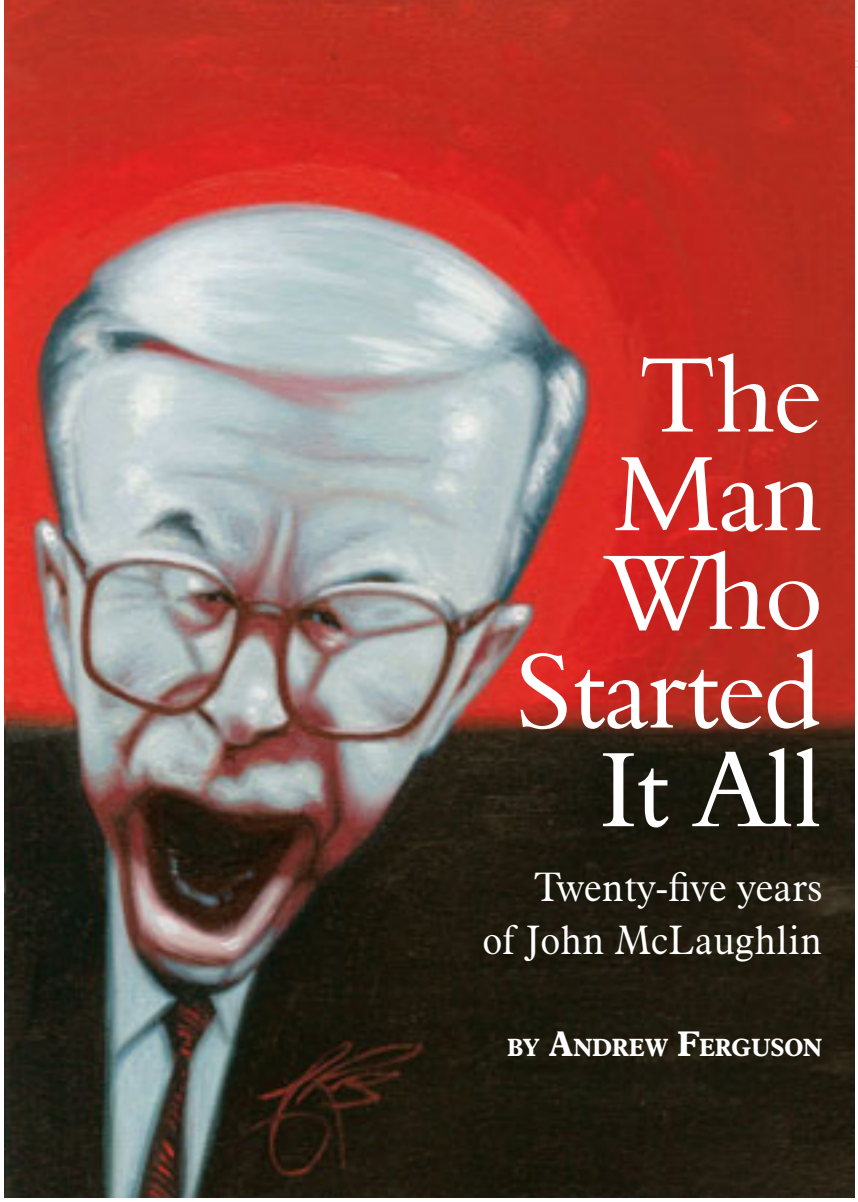

The Man Who Started It All

Twenty-five years of John McLaughlin

BY ANDREW FERGUSON

Okay, if he won't mention it, I will: The year just ending marks the 25th anniversary of *The McLaughlin Group*, the landmark public affairs TV show founded by John McLaughlin. It's odd that McLaughlin himself hasn't made a bigger deal of it. A shameless showman, he's celebrated his earlier anniversaries with full-tilt hoopla—retrospective programs and public commendations and lavish parties held in the gilded ballrooms of downtown hotels.

About the silver anniversary, however, we've heard not a peep. I'm not sure why this is so, but—in tribute to the McLaughlin method of journalism—I will take a wild guess. The show has been in a long decline. Ratings are down, syndication is down, the panelists seem listless, the host himself often distracted or fatigued. The formula is now limp in the hands of the man who invented it. There's nothing to lift McLaughlin's famous bellow above the general riot heard round the clock from Fox, MSNBC, or CNN. Maybe McLaughlin figures that any reminder of the show's age would just invite stories of the "Lion in Winter" variety: The man who started it all fades away, unloved and unacknowledged. Even a publicity hound of McLaughlin's appetites would probably prefer to do without those.

Yet he did start it all, you know. That's why the *Group*'s anniversary deserves some kind of notice. McLaughlin is the most influential figure in televised political journalism since . . . well, forever, probably. That he has become lost amidst the army of his imitators merely proves the size of his achievement. McLaughlin appeared at the dawn of the cable news era, when the orthodoxy of mainstream "consensus journalism" still seemed unassailable. That orthodoxy, as reinforced daily in the major newspapers and on the broadcast networks, was unconsciously liberal, resolutely self-important, and intensely boring. We now know that consensus journalism was an artifact of postwar mass media. Big audiences were needed to sustain the profits of broadcast networks and large-circulation newspapers. The bland, inoffensive journalism of the period was in large part a financial necessity, even if some of its practitioners convinced themselves that it was grounded in metaphysical notions of public service and social uplift.

McLaughlin saw through the consensus to other, richer possibilities. In TV commentary—"news analysis," as it was called—the orthodoxy was asserted in deadly chinwags like *Agronsky and Company*, which is now gone, and *Washington Week in Review*, which is still breathing, though barely. McLaughlin designed his Group to subvert the very premises of the Washington political conversation—by being, among other things, bizarrely amusing, even exciting. Droning was forbidden; no topic could occupy more than four minutes' airtime. McLaughlin bellowed at his panelists and the panelists bellowed back; feuds developed among them, alliances were formed and broke apart in a shower of insults. The 24 minutes of an average show zipped by at laser speed. Though the *Group* never topped the duller shows in the ratings, its reach and power left the others sputtering about a "decline in standards."

They were right about the decline, but they were wrong that the standards were worth preserving. As on *Agronsky* or *Washington Week*, the jibber-jabber on McLaughlin was pris-

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tinely pointless, but at least McLaughlin made it seem fun. It was gasbaggery unencumbered by pretension; all you needed to appreciate it was a short attention span. By the time cable television became the main supplier of political news, the orthodoxy had suffered a lethal blow. Commentary was demystified, and fact commingled shamelessly with opinion. As McLaughlin and his panelists became celebrities and grew rich from speaking engagements and road shows, punditry replaced reporting as the dearest aspiration of would-be journalists. Perhaps most important, anti-establishment conservatism became unignorable, for alone among the chat shows, the *Group* declined to treat right-wing ideas as though they were freakish anomalies smuggled into the capital by the Reaganite junta.

Whether this upending of the established order was good for us is, I suppose, a matter of opinion—in fact, thanks in part to the kind of journalism McLaughlin popularized, everything seems to be a matter of opinion these days—but you've got to admit, it was a lot for one man to accomplish. How did he do it? I worked for him once, in the early 1990s, and though my employment lasted slightly less than 24 hours, it was long enough for me to begin to answer the question. Through friends I'd heard McLaughlin was looking for a part-timer to help him research and write the lead-ins to each show's video segments. The money was pretty good and whoever got the job would also get an on-screen credit as an assistant producer. The show was still at its peak of influence and charm. I thought: TV!

In a city famous for tyrannical bosses, from congressmen crazed with drink to bureau chiefs aflame with illicit desire, McLaughlin had become a legend. You heard stories of volcanic rages, unimaginable flights of egomania. Least among his eccentricities was his requirement that all staffers refer to him as "Dr. McLaughlin," because he had once earned a Ph.D. in communications or some other of the lesser academic disciplines. "I can handle that," I said to myself, and after a brief interview I was told to show up early Friday morning to prepare for the show's taping at midday.

The McLaughlin legend, I quickly discovered, had shortchanged the McLaughlin reality. When I opened the door to his production company's suite, the first words I heard came roaring up in the famous Rhode Island drawl: "This is s—! Unadulterated s—!" From the shadows of a darkened office, behind a desk as vast as the deck of an aircraft carrier, McLaughlin would bellow at his staff through an intercom. His voice ricocheted down hallways, and the epithets burst like ack-ack above the dim cubicles where his assistants cowered and trembled. The abuse was astonishing, unpredictable, and, in several instances, cruel. A single tirade could last for an hour.

He didn't scream at me. Part-timers generally, and men in particular, were usually exempt from his outbursts. That didn't mean our newborn relationship was normal.

He didn't scream at me, though. Part-timers generally, and men in particular, were usually exempt from his outbursts. That didn't mean our newborn relationship was normal. For my first task he told me to work up a lead-in to a segment on some bit of legislative sausage grinding its way through Congress. "Cokie Roberts had an excellent report on the bill on NPR this morning," he said. "I taped it to make it *easiah* on you. It's all the background *resuch* you'll need."

I went back to another office carrying Dr. McLaughlin's handheld recorder. He had evidently propped it against his radio speaker to record the tape that morning. "Considerate of the old bastard," I thought, pressing the play button. I heard Cokie's swampy voice explaining the doings on the Hill. And then I heard water rushing, and a clatter of ceramic, and a mysterious release of air, and I realized that the doctor had made the tape in the bathroom. I was hearing his morning ablutions: the gush of faucets running and the honk-honk of nasal passages clearing and the rumble of phlegm rising and . . . much worse. Scraps of show tunes hummed off-key competed against every noise the human organism is capable of producing at that hour of the day, and together they threatened to drown out Cokie's report: "The prognosis, critics say, is still a matter of *PHLOOOTH!*" At times I could barely make out what she was saying. I'd rewind the tape only to hear some new intimate eruption. I shut off the recorder after four or five minutes. I wrote up the lead-in as best I could and walked back to his darkened lair.

He was eating an enormous platter of steak and eggs from the restaurant downstairs. "Did you *learn* anything, Andrew?" he said from behind his desk, with a half smile. He dabbed his thumb and forefinger on the napkin tucked into his collar.

"It's hazing," one of the assistants told me later that morning. "He's establishing the parameters of your relationship. This way you know who's in the dominant position. He can embarrass you, but you can't embarrass him. That's the key: He refuses to be embarrassed."

I quit after the taping that afternoon, with no hard feelings but with, I've always thought, a special insight into the personality required to do what McLaughlin did: transform the trade of political journalism and establish a new industry that, alas, would accelerate so rapidly it eventually passed him by. When I watch TV I marvel at the personalities who rule public-affairs television today—Chris Matthews, Bill O'Reilly, Keith Olbermann, Sean Hannity, and all the others in that eager, endless parade of peacocks and posers—and I still wonder how they can do what they do, night after night and week upon week. And then I remember: They're Dr. McLaughlin's children. They refuse to be embarrassed. ♦

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McCain's Last Stand

He still has a chance.

BY FRED BARNES

Inman, South Carolina

John McCain finished a Q-and-A session with reporters here with a shot of his offbeat humor. "Thank you, jerks," he said. A few hours later, he suggested in a speech to the Greenville Rotary Club that former Federal Reserve chairman Alan Greenspan could head a commission to reform the federal tax system. If he's dead, McCain said, "prop him up and put some dark glasses on him, just like in *Weekend at Bernie's*."

McCain sneers at the importance of Iowa, whose caucuses on January 3 are the first contest in the Republican presidential race. "If I don't finish in the top 50 in Iowa, I'll still stay in the race," he told reporters in South Carolina last week. In Iowa the next day, McCain went out of his way in a televised debate to denounce the federal subsidy for ethanol, a popular program in the state.

So the old McCain is back, the flippant, contrarian candidate who came close to defeating George W. Bush for the Republican nomination in 2000. And amazingly enough, after his campaign to be nominee in 2008 all but collapsed this summer, McCain is experiencing a rebirth. He now has a chance—an outside chance, at least—of winning the Republican nomination.

Things large and small in the campaign have been moving McCain's way. The war in Iraq has turned sharply toward victory now that President Bush has adopted the strategy McCain had been recommending for several years. This is McCain's best issue and now a distinct plus for his campaign. And the immigration issue, a poisonous one for McCain, has become less intense since his immigrant-friendly approach lost in the Senate last summer.

Then there's the rise of Mike Huckabee, the ex-Arkansas governor. If he defeats Mitt Romney in Iowa next month—and polls show Huckabee ahead—that will disrupt Romney's early-state strategy and leave him vulnerable in the New Hampshire primary on January 8. To capture the nomination, McCain must win in New Hampshire. McCain, by the way, likes Huckabee and can't stand Romney.

THOMAS FLUHARTY

Just as Romney has run into trouble, McCain's other rivals have as well. The campaign of Rudy Giuliani, the ex-New York City mayor, has stalled amid a burst of unfavorable media stories. Former senator Fred Thompson has failed to stir significant support among conservatives, his target group. Still, like Huckabee, Thompson is running hard against Romney in Iowa.

In his up and down campaign, McCain has already disproved two pieces of conventional wisdom. One is that Republicans are a primogeniture party that routinely makes the next major Republican figure in line the near-prohibitive frontrunner. McCain, having paid his dues in 2000, did lead the pack initially, but his campaign cratered in June from overspending and the unpopularity of his position on immigration.

The second is that primary debates don't matter. In McCain's case (and Huckabee's), however, televised debates have been a godsend. McCain's recovery began in a Fox News debate in New Hampshire on September 5, when he pugnaciously challenged Romney on the surge.

Romney said the surge—consisting of a troop buildup in Iraq and a new counterinsurgency strategy—was "apparently working." No, McCain responded sharply, "not apparently—it's working." Romney said he wanted to hear from General David Petraeus, the Iraq commander, to be certain. McCain took exception to that. The surge's success, he repeated, "is more than apparent. It's working."

McCain was instantly crowned by the media as the winner of the debate. In effect, he was rewarded for vociferously persevering in his support for a war the media opposes. Even a few of his advisers had urged him to downplay his pro-Iraq position.

Six weeks later, McCain scored again in the Fox News debate in Orlando. The day before at a campaign event at the nearby Shingle Creek Resort, he had zinged Hillary Clinton for proposing to spend $1 million for a Woodstock concert museum. And hours before the evening debate, he told a town meeting he'd missed the Woodstock concert in 1969 because he "was tied up at the time."

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He was a POW in North Vietnam.

His aides urged him to use the line in the debate. And he did—to great effect. After mentioning Clinton's Woodstock scheme, McCain said, "I wasn't there. I'm sure it was a cultural and pharmaceutical event." He paused as the audience laughed, then delivered the punchline. "I was tied up at the time." The crowd roared.

McCain is concentrating his campaign on New Hampshire, where "he's got to win," according to former senator Phil Gramm of Texas, who traveled with McCain last week. If Romney loses there, "he's out of the race," Gramm says. Then, adds McCain adviser Charles Black, McCain will win in Michigan and South Carolina and take command of the race.

"Deep in their hearts," Gramm says, "Republican primary voters know John McCain is the only great man running for president." Maybe, but McCain doesn't make it easy for them to vote for him.

To the delight of Republicans, he passionately defends the war in Iraq, favors restraining entitlements, and calls for cuts in government spending and elimination of earmarks. But he insists on stressing issues like global warming and strict limits on interrogation of terrorists, which are anathema to many Republicans. He regularly refers to illegal immigrants as "God's children," another irritant for some. And in farm state Iowa McCain declared he would "eliminate subsidies on ethanol and other agricultural products."

It's all part of the McCain package that's far more conservative than not and often unpredictable. In Inman, a man gave McCain a pack of Marlboro cigarettes, saying he'd done the same on an aircraft carrier off Vietnam decades ago.

There was no reason for McCain to comment on this, yet he did. He held up the pack and said there was good news and bad news. "I've not had a cigarette in 28 years," he said. "That's the good news. The bad news is I still want a cigarette." The best news for McCain, though, is that he once again has a shot at the Republican nomination. ♦

The Perils of Huckaplomacy

Don't know much about foreign policy.

BY STEPHEN F. HAYES

Just moments into the third Republican presidential debate, last June 5, CNN's Wolf Blitzer asked former Arkansas governor Mike Huckabee about Iraq. "Governor Huckabee, do you have confidence in the government of Iraq, the government of Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki, that he's going to do what needs to be done?"

Huckabee responded:

> I think there's some real doubt about that, Wolf. But I want to remind all of us on this stage and the people in the audience that there's a reason that this is such a struggle. And I think we miss it over here in the West. Today's the birthday of Ronald Reagan. We all would believe that Ronald Reagan is the one who ended the Cold War, and Ronald Reagan is the one who helped bring about the collapse of the Soviet Union. But there's a group of people who don't believe that, and that's the Taliban. They believe they brought about the demise of the Soviet Union because of the way they fought in Afghanistan. And what I want to just mention is that it is not the size of the dog in the fight, it is the size of the fight in the dog.

At another GOP debate in Baltimore, journalist Cynthia Tucker asked Huckabee about Darfur. "Governor," she wondered, "does the U.S. have a role to play in ending the genocide in Darfur? And, if so, what should that role be?"

Huckabee answered:

> I think we have some role to play in it, but I guess what disturbs me even more, we have not even addressed the genocide that's going on and the infanticide in our own country with the slaughter of millions of unborn children. And we also have extraordinary poverty in this country. Yes, we ought to be involved. But you know something? There are a lot of people in America that don't think the only poverty is in Darfur—understand, there's poverty in the Delta. There are people who don't have running water, people that don't have access to medical care and don't have a decent school to go to and you don't have to go halfway around the world to find it. We've got it right here in this country.

So much for Nuri al-Maliki and Darfur.

Those two questions are interesting not only because of Huckabee's nonanswers, but because together they represent some of the most determined efforts to get Huckabee to talk about his views on foreign policy and national security. A review of the dozens of questions posed to Huckabee throughout the Republican debates stretching from May through last week finds only a handful seeking to test his knowledge and views on those issues. For much of that time, Huckabee was still a second-tier candidate, and he received questions mostly about social issues and his faith. So striking was the trend that Huckabee himself once joked about it.

> Q: Governor Huckabee, you are an ordained minister. What is the most pressing moral issue in this country?

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A: Well, it looks like I'm getting all the moral questions tonight. And I guess that's a good thing. That's better than getting the immoral questions, so I'm happy to get those.

Things are different now. Huckabee is leading polls in Iowa and South Carolina. He is picking up support nationally, too. And he is doing this despite the fact that Republican voters consistently tell pollsters that national security remains a top priority for them as they consider presidential candidates.

Huckabee's most extensive remarks on national security and foreign policy came during an address he prepared for the Decision 2008 series at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, D.C., on September 28. (He borrows heavily from this speech for an article to appear in the January/February issue of *Foreign Affairs*.) While there were some strong elements in that speech—he spoke out in favor of the surge and made clear that he would be aggressive in targeting al Qaeda operatives in Pakistan—Huckabee often sounded confused and naive.

The United States, he said, is like the exceptional kid we all knew growing up. If only the United States were not such a braggadocio and spent more time encouraging other countries to be their best—helping them with their spelling tests, as it were—these countries would spend less time wishing us ill and more time emulating us. (Does that mean we should be doing more to rebuild Afghanistan and Iraq? Huckabee didn't say.)

Huckabee also curiously suggested he would "beef up our human intelligence capacity" because he would "rather have more people in Langley so we can have fewer in Baghdad."

More problematic for his presidential prospects, when Huckabee did speak clearly he often sounded more like Dennis Kucinich than Dick Cheney, something Republican primary voters are not likely to find appealing.

The Bush administration is guilty of a "bunker mentality," said Huckabee. The war in Iraq has "distracted" the administration from pursuing al Qaeda. Although Iran wanted better relations with the United States, he averred, "when President Bush included Iran in the axis of evil, everything went downhill pretty fast." And according to Huckabee, it was not Saddam Hussein but "the U.S. occupation" that "destroyed Iraq politically, economically, and socially." (Huckabee's remarks won praise as "nuanced and comprehensive" from the host of the event, a senior adviser on Bill Clinton's National Security Council.)

When Huckabee spoke clearly he often sounded more like Dennis Kucinich than Dick Cheney. The Bush administration is guilty of a 'bunker mentality.' The war in Iraq, he said, 'distracted' the Bush administration from pursuing al Qaeda. Although Iran wanted better relations with the United States, he averred, 'when President Bush included Iran in the axis of evil, everything went downhill pretty fast.'

In the 11 weeks since that speech, Huckabee has made several other statements about foreign policy in a Huckabee administration. He favors a comprehensive ban on the use of harsh interrogation techniques to extract information from terrorists, and he has urged the Bush administration to close the prison at Guantánamo Bay. And as the writers at the Powerline blog have pointed out, Huckabee seems to believe the best foreign policy is one guided by the Golden Rule—"you treat others the way you'd like to be treated"—and mutual respect, "showing the kind of respect that other nations would want and deserve."

In November, he told a producer for Pat Robertson's Christian Broadcasting Network that his religious background made him most qualified to lead the war on terror.

In fact I think I'm stronger than most people because I truly understand the nature of the war that we are in with Islamofascism. These are people that want to kill us. It's a theocratic war. And I don't know if anybody fully understands that. I'm the only guy on that stage with a theology degree.

Mike Huckabee says he begins every day by reading a chapter of Proverbs. But one day not long ago—coincidentally the day that Huckabee allowed Zev Chafets, a writer from the *New York Times Magazine*, to join him on the campaign trail—the former Arkansas governor did not have time for his daily reading. Nonetheless, he knew much of that day's assignment, Proverbs 3, by heart. He quoted for his companion: "Trust in the Lord, and lean not upon thine own understanding."

Amen. ♦

DREW FRIEDMAN

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Independence Day?

Forget the U.N., forget the EU—Kosovars look to America. BY STEPHEN SCHWARTZ

Pristina, Kosovo

This capital may be the only city in the world with streets named for Robert Dole, Bill Clinton, Mother Teresa, and Edward Lear. The rationale for the first two is simple—Dole was a champion of the Kosovar Albanians long before any other American politician paid attention to them, and Clinton remains a hero to Albanians for his 1999 intervention against Serbian massacres in the territory, then a restive Albanian-majority province of Serbia. Mother Teresa was of Albanian origin, although born in Macedonia. As for Lear, author of "The Owl and the Pussycat" and other works of nonsense verse, Albanians remember him as an artist who created beautiful paintings and sketches of their towns and countryside.

Mother Teresa Avenue is Pristina's main street, and on Monday, December 10, it was filled for two hours with thousands of loud but orderly marchers demanding immediate independence for Kosovo. That date was the deadline for a "Kosovo solution," promised but not delivered by the United States, the European Union, and Russia.

The demonstration was called by students aligned with the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK), a political structure emerging from the former Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), which won a plurality of the vote (35 percent) in elections to the largely powerless parliament on November 17. Led by Hashim Thaci, the PDK is poised to regain power, such as it is in a territory ruled by the United Nations.

It is hard to know what political action really means here. Later that same Monday, the "Self-Determination movement"—denied legal status by the U.N. but not actually suppressed—screened a short documentary at a small cinema in the center of town. It showed footage of pro-independence demonstrations called by the group last winter, on February 10. The film showed U.N. police from ex-Communist Romania shooting tear gas, then rubber-covered metal projectiles, at the protesters. Two young men, Arben Xheladini and Mon Balaj, were killed, and marchers were filmed taking one of them, covered with blood, to a hospital.

Not surprisingly, the recent demonstration featured no U.N. flags. Kosovar Albanians have run out of patience with the U.N. and the European Union, both of which appear as playthings for Vladimir Putin, backer of Serbia in its continuing effort to hold onto Kosovo. In the Balkans, we may be seeing early indications of a future in which the challenge of radical Islam will have been a mere episode, while the ancient ambitions of Russian power are revived and a new cold war begins, without the ideology of communism, but with plenty of oil and gas money fueling Muscovite imperial dreams.

What the demonstrators did carry were the Stars and Stripes, along with Albanian flags, and placards calling on the United States to help Kosovo gain its freedom. Kosovar Albanians are devoted to America, though they are also confused by mixed messages from Washington.

In early December, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice affirmed that diplomacy on Kosovo had failed. "We have to move on to the next step. It is not going to help to put off decisions that need to be taken," Rice said—that "next step" being independence.

Yet Frank Wisner Jr., head of the U.S. Diplomatic Office in Pristina, seemed to defy his boss. On December 10 he was quoted in the Serbian and Albanian media declaring that the "Ahtisaari report," named for a Finnish U.N. diplomat, remains the guideline for U.S. policy. The Ahtisaari scheme would give Kosovo only "supervised independence" under continued U.N. domination. Secretary Rice should be wary of Wisner's apparent attempt to harmonize American policy with the intrigues of Europeans frightened by Russia, which demands that any further developments take place in the U.N. Security Council, where Putin has promised to veto Kosovo independence.

In the aftermath of Rice's comments, I interviewed Albin Kurti, the youthful leader of the Self-Determination movement, at length. Kurti, a former student leader imprisoned by the Serbs, stated that he does not distrust the United States or our intentions in the Balkans, but Kosovars should take Israel as their model.

"People say Israel is strong because it has the United States as a friend, but in reality the United States supports Israel because Israel declared its independence and maintains its own strength. Strong allies do not compensate for a country's own weakness," Kurti said. "Let us first be strong in ourselves, like the Israelis, and then we will be certain of our relations with the United States and other states." Kurti and others note bitterly that Kosovar Albanian politicians want the United States to declare independence for them.

Kurti's sympathy for Israel contrasts dramatically with claims made by Serb apologists that Albanians, who are overwhelmingly Muslim, want to turn Kosovo into an al Qaeda

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rogue state. Indeed, not long before my meeting with Kurti, I spoke with one of the leading Kosovar Islamic scholars, Xhabir Hamiti, who was preparing to go to Israel for an event promoting interreligious and interethnic dialogue, and who was greatly excited by the opportunity to see the Jewish state for himself. Hamiti warned that Saudi-financed Wahhabis are persistent in their attempts to infiltrate Kosovo, although they have so far encountered little success. The Islamic scholar also criticized Iranian attempts in the same direction.

Kurti, for his part, is nonreligious, but points out a previously ignored aspect of the Saudi problem in the Balkans: The Saudis come to small villages and promise to build mosques (many of which were destroyed by the Serbs) and schools. The new mosques appear, along with Saudi imams, but the schools have yet to be constructed. And Kosovo needs schools more than anything else. In Pristina one sees a spectacle never encountered in Sarajevo: school-age boys, during school hours, selling cigarettes and chewing gum on the streets. The U.N. bears great responsibility for this, since it neglects spending for education in Kosovo.

Albin Kurti was jailed again for his leadership of the February 10 Self-Determination protest and faces trial before a foreign judge. He is now under house arrest, allowed to leave his home for several hours each day. When I suggested that, like Hamiti, he should go to Israel and see the country for himself, Kurti reminded me that he remains restricted in his movements and has no passport. But he has used his time wisely and has become a fountain of disturbing facts and figures about the Kosovo situation.

According to Kurti—and it is a situation I have long observed—U.N. and other foreign officials live well as administrators of the impoverished Kosovars, which is one of their main incentives to delay the country's independence. "They want to continue foreign rule in a lighter form," he said. All the resources for Kosovo's economic and social rehabilitation are held abroad, since Kosovo has no banks of its own. A U.N.-appointed official, Vlora Obertinca, confirmed in October that a privatization fund of 379 million euros (about $550 million) is deposited at low interest in banks outside Kosovo. A pension fund of 241 million euros ($350 million) to which all Kosovo residents are obliged to contribute is administered in the same way, according to the U.S. Agency for International Development, but use of it for investment is frozen. As Kurti notes, Kosovo pays tens of millions of euros a year to a company based in the tax haven of Monaco for its cell phone service, while shelling out a similar sum to Serbia for its landline telephone system. Kosovo also has a huge trade deficit, with a third still going to Serbia for imports of food and other products.

The local banks in which Kosovars deposit their meager incomes are German or Austrian. Because of the lack of economic infrastructure, the large and prosperous Albanian diaspora in Switzerland, Germany, and the United States has stopped investing in Kosovo, according to Kurti.

Kosovo produces only two things, he said: money paid to or handled by foreigners, and an excess of local politicians. Innumerable billboards, which in a normal country would advertise consumer products, show the faces of political figures. He noted that the smallest villages, without water or power or paved roads, all have billboards produced by the U.N. calling on the inhabitants to be "tolerant." In this situation, however, tolerance means acceptance of poverty and dependence rather than acceptance of non-Albanian neighbors, Kurti said.

Kurti commented with bitter humor, "Serbia should be under foreign administration, rather than Kosovo or Bosnia-Herzegovina, with the United States following the same practices it applied in Germany and Japan after World War II. . . . If we accept that at least 250,000 people were killed in the Yugoslav wars, then there are tens of thousands of murderers walking free in Serbia. Instead, we have a situation as if France or the Netherlands, rather than Germany, had been occupied after 1945."

Kurti says the U.N. acts as if Kosovo did not exist until the new foreign rulers arrived in 1999. "We were discovered then," he says, "like the inhabitants of the New World when the Spanish suddenly arrived." The U.N. Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK, a word bizarrely reminiscent of the Albanian word for "enemy") has produced no budget for 2008. Its management principle—the same one that prevailed under Tito's communism—is improvisation. But under communism, at least there was a semblance of planning, while in the U.N.-ruled Balkans policies are made up on the spot, day by day.

Throughout the Balkans, fear of Serbia and Russia is acute. People on the street in Pristina and Sarajevo view Putin as their main enemy. Serbia itself is seen as a spoiler, attempting to use its Russian backing to impose itself as a stand-in for Europe as mediator between the United States and Russia. Serbian politicians threaten war if Kosovo declares independence. Urged on by Putin, they also assert that if Kosovo becomes free, the so-called "Serb Republic" occupying half of Bosnia-Herzegovina must be granted independence too.

The Albanian poet Gjergj Fishta (1871-1940) wrote at the beginning of the twentieth century,

> In St. Petersburg the Russian tsar
> Took an oath before his people . . .
> To rule over land and water
> Cutting off all Europe's commerce
> Banning any export or import
> Letting no business be established
> Holding Europe in his power . . .
> Never once did he consider
> That his deeds might plunge the planet
> Altogether into mourning.

Fishta's verses (adapted here from a translation by Robert Elsie) were written a century ago; but for Albanians, Bosnians, and others in the Balkans threatened by the new flexing of Russian muscles, little has changed. ♦

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Try a Little Forgiveness

The Bush-Paulson mortgage bailout.

BY IRWIN M. STELZER

American capitalism as we know it is dead; America is now the Argentina of the north, a place where no contract is sacred. So go the more apocalyptic reactions to the Bush administration's proposed intervention in the home mortgage market. "Who would invest in U.S. bonds or mortgages if the government could arbitrarily reduce the contracted interest payments?" asks Martin Feldstein in the *Wall Street Journal*, expecting the answer to be "No one at all."

All because the Bush administration persuaded—well, coerced—lenders to give some of the nation's hard-pressed borrowers a bit of breathing room. If the administration can work the kinks out of its plans, including refining the definition of intended beneficiaries, many resets—read, increases—scheduled for the next few years in about $150 billion of subprime mortgages won't happen, at least for five years. Most repossessions won't happen either.

This has two political aspects, one bothersome to the Bush team, one considered a major plus. The negative is that it boosts Hillary Clinton, who suggested a similar "foreclosure timeout" many months ago. Unless the White House wants to add to her prestige because it feels that the senator from New York is the most beatable of all Democratic candidates, the Bush team can't enjoy hearing her inevitable "I told you so."

The political plus is that the Bush-Paulson team believes its plan will have its major helpful impact in politically important states: California and Florida account for 28 percent of all adjustable-rate subprime mortgages, and Michigan and Ohio are in the throes of house price declines that have seen foreclosures rise even on traditional fixed-rate mortgages.

There is no denying that the administration plan has its flaws. It seems to discriminate against prime borrowers who find themselves unable to refinance, while favoring subprime borrowers in the same circumstance. And it might not be immune from lawsuits by investors who want to prevent this change in the terms of their contract with borrowers—a contingency that Clinton proposes to cover with separate legislation.

Nor is there any denying that government pressure on lenders to change the terms of their mortgage contracts creates a new risk, and that lenders in the future will take account of that increased risk by setting the terms of new loans less favorably for borrowers. But that does not answer the difficult question of whether the Bush/Paulson plan is good policy. For against that cost must be set the benefit of easing pressures on seized-up financial markets and perhaps avoiding a recession; preventing the dumping of hundreds of thousands of houses on an already glutted market, with consequences not only for the construction industry but for consumer behavior; and stopping the eviction of hundreds of thousands of families who might in the long run be able to hold onto their homes if their incomes rise during

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the period in which rates are frozen.

It is difficult to know whether the benefits exceed the costs of the plan—which, it should be remembered, involves no taxpayer funds. But the answer won't be found by chanting ideological slogans about sanctity of contracts, or saving the unfortunate from rapacious bankers. And it won't be found in attacks on government intervention in the free market—no such market exists in housing, and has not for the many decades since the government set up a variety of agencies to make credit more easily available to potential homeowners. Then there is the distorting effect of the mortgage-interest tax exemption, but that is a story for another day. The point is: We are not dealing with any perversion of an otherwise free market of the sort envisioned by Adam Smith.

We do seem to be on safe ground when we question whether the standard "moral hazard" argument applies here. Presumably, policies that bail out people who have engaged in irresponsible behavior are to be avoided, lest those saved from their own sins be tempted to repeat their foolishness. And there is no doubt that some of the borrowers did engage in irresponsible borrowing, just as some of the lenders did engage in irresponsible, and even fraudulent, lending. But the administration's plan does not bail out the banks and other lenders, so it contains no encouragement to repeat the sloppy lending practices that now are causing the banks so much pain. It might encourage borrowers to think that they can take on any commitment, and when they can't pay, look to the government for relief. But these potential re-offenders would have to find a lender willing to make such loans, and even bankers with notoriously short memories are unlikely to trawl the markets for subprime borrowers very soon. So there is little reason to oppose the administration's plan solely because of any moral hazard problem it might create—that concern should be directed at the Fed as it desperately tries to make life easier for bankers, at the risk of triggering the inflation already threatened by rising food and energy costs.

A final objection to the administration's proposal is that by coming between the lenders and the flow of mortgage payments to which their contracts entitle them, the government is transferring a huge pot of wealth from lenders to borrowers. But is it? In fact, the lenders were never going to get repaid in full at reset rates that in some cases hit 11 percent, and would be stuck with repossessed houses that could be resold in many cases for only a fraction of the value of the underlying mortgages. So they might in fact be better off getting interest rates that, although lower than they had hoped, enable them to avoid loading up on difficult-to-sell repossessed houses. The banks know this, of course, but because some 95 percent of subprime mortgages are packaged into securities, they were having trouble tracking down the ultimate holders of each mortgage, and arranging one-on-one negotiations between borrower and lender. The administration's plan goes a long way towards solving that problem. It might be a bit of a blunderbuss, but that weapon does have uses when rifle shots just won't do the job.

What this plan for relief means is that even a very conservative government has come to realize that houses are not shirts. Wear a dirty shirt, with buttons missing, and you pay the price; tolerate a run-down house, with shutters askew and lawn unmowed, and you *and* your neighbors pay the price. As an economist would put it, there are real externalities at play in the housing market. And where there are externalities, the argument for activist government is hard to beat, and can be trumped only by the not unreasonable fear that the government might just make matters worse by trying to make them better.

Economists have long known that home ownership conveys benefits not only on the family for which it provides shelter, but for others who have not contributed to the cost of the home. As Treasury Secretary Hank Paulson realized when he tried to unravel the problem created by subprime mortgages about to reset from low "teaser" rates to much higher levels, there is something different about a home. Paulson, whose original instinct was to steer clear of the mess—his day job, after all, is persuading the Chinese to become fair traders and stop stealing our intellectual property—finally realized that homeowners are more likely to be involved in civic activities, conveying benefits on neighbors. And that empty and/or derelict houses reduce the value of the homes of neighboring families who have fully met all of their mortgage obligations.

It doesn't take more than common-sense observation to realize that neighborhoods characterized by high rates of home ownership tend to have lower rates of crime, better schools, a healthier environment in which to raise children, more vibrant churches and civic institutions, and all of the Ozzie-and-Harriet advantages that Americans work so hard to obtain for themselves and their children. That is to paint with a broad brush, but the picture is broadly accurate, which is why owning a home is so important a part of the American dream.

So when the government intervenes to prevent an eviction, it benefits not only the poor wretch who cannot afford to keep up his payments, but the entire neighborhood. Banks are not the best custodians. Few banks successfully maintain a repossessed house in sparkling order. And even if they did, the for-sale sign planted on the lawn is a warning to neighbors that the value of their property might be dropping; get out while the getting is good.

My own studies, done in connection with long-time colleague Bill Shew with a grant from Freddie Mac, reached a similar conclusion. And one we had not anticipated. It is that even after allowing for the subsidy provided to home buyers by Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae by virtue of investors' assumption that these agencies' are too big to fail, society is more than compensated by the increase in home ownership, with all the benefits that brings.

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This fact is one that even small-government conservatives have to consider when deciding whether to travel down the road to increased government involvement in the mortgage markets. Paulson, a Goldman Sachs graduate and hardly a wild-eyed radical, finds himself on that road, and moving further and further down it. At road's end stands the man who will be his principal collaborator in Congress, a welcoming liberal Democrat by the name of Barney Frank. ♦

Guess Who Didn't Come to Annapolis

Bush asked the Iraqis to attend the peace conference. Why didn't they? BY JONATHAN KARL

With security improving in Iraq, it's possible for the first time in a long time to think about the role a sovereign Iraq will play in the Middle East.

Long ago, advocates of the war hoped the post-Saddam government would be in the vanguard of a changed Middle East. It would be democratic. It would be a reliable ally of the United States. And it would be an Arab country willing to deal with Israel. Well, Iraq was the major no-show at the Israeli-Palestinian peace conference in Annapolis last month.

Asked at the conference about Iraq's absence, State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said, "We invited them. We thought that they could have made a positive contribution. They chose not to come." In fact, the Bush administration did more than just invite Iraq to Annapolis. Senior officials lobbied hard, making the case that Iraq needed to be there to show the world that a maturing Iraqi government is ready to be a regional player. President Bush personally asked Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki to send a representative—a fact the White House does not like to advertise.

The Iraqis didn't turn down the invitation, they simply failed to respond to it. Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari wanted to go, but Maliki refused to make a decision on whether to participate. The conference date approached, and it became too late for Zebari to travel to Annapolis. It was then suggested that the Iraqi ambassador to the United States, Samir al-Sumaydi, represent Iraq at the conference.

Unable or unwilling to decide whether the Iraqi ambassador should go to Annapolis, Nuri al-Maliki convened a secret cabinet meeting on the day of the conference to vote. A majority voted against attending; a senior official revealed that the vote wasn't even close.

On the morning of the conference, frustrated U.S. officials still did not have an answer. Amazingly, they had an easier time dealing with Syria, a government that barely has diplomatic relations with Washington. Syria was in town, and Maliki still hadn't made a decision. Ambassador al-Sumaydi, his briefcase packed, was ready to take the drive to Annapolis as soon as he had a green light from Baghdad.

Still unable or unwilling to make the decision, Maliki convened a secret cabinet meeting on the day of the conference to vote on whether to allow al-Sumaydi to go to Annapolis. A majority of the cabinet voted against attending. No one will say how the vote broke down, but a senior official tells me it wasn't even close. The public reason they gave for nonattendance was a "scheduling conflict."

But there is a more convincing reason: Iran. The Annapolis conference was designed in part to isolate Iran, the only country in the region not invited. Iran loudly condemned the conference and called for a boycott. As Iran's government spokesman said after the conference was announced, "Regarding our brotherhood relations with Islamic countries, such as Saudi Arabia, we are not interested in these countries standing next to the U.S. and Israel."

In the end, the one Arab country the Iranians seems to have had enough influence to convince to boycott the conference was Iraq. (The Kuwaitis were also a no-show, but they were not lobbied to attend like the Iraqis.) Maliki faced a dilemma: skip the conference and offend the United States or attend the conference and offend Iran.

The United States has 160,000 troops in Iraq, but Iran also has real influence. The second largest embassy in Baghdad is the Iranian embassy. And unlike the American embassy, where almost none of the diplomats speak the language and almost all serve for terms of only 12 months, the Iranian embassy is staffed with people who have spent their entire careers working with some of Iraq's Shia political leadership, dating back to when those leaders were in the opposition—many of them in exile in Iran.

That is not to say that an independent Maliki government is going to be controlled by Iran, but it isn't controlled by the United States either. An Iraq that can stand on its own is an important goal for the United States, but we shouldn't be surprised when it doesn't stand exactly where we want it to. ♦

Jonathan Karl is senior national security correspondent for ABC News.

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Mormons, Muslims, and Multiculturalism

The deeply dispiriting Romney-Huckabee showdown

By Kenneth Anderson

Some personal declarations: Mitt Romney is not my candidate. He is (in my humble opinion) a man of principles so pragmatic that he lacks any unshakeable political foundation, save that he ought to be president of the United States. He is a politician of the moderate center who has sat down with his consultants in the calculus of management consultants everywhere and concluded that winning the presidency must mean dropping his moderation—itself principally a means of winning office in liberal Massachusetts—and reinventing himself as a man of the right. I'm afraid Fred Barnes was mistaken to suggest a few weeks ago in these pages that Romney means the "CEO as president." Right church, wrong pew. In fact, Romney represents the rational-choice presidency of Bain, Boston Consulting Group, and McKinsey; democracy as the maximization of consumer preferences; the president as *primus* consultant *inter pares*. Thanks but no thanks.

Moreover, Romney's consultant skills and consequent lack of principle (yet again in my humble opinion) do indeed derive from a specifically *Mormon* aspect of his upbringing. It is the two-year mission, in which young men of the church—the pairs of unenviable, dweeby males in their white shirts and ties trudging the streets, seeking converts as a rite of passage to adulthood—are taught discipline, perseverance, responsibility, leadership, self-reliance, teamwork, humility, and the beginnings of wisdom (in striking contrast to most of their non-Mormon peers of similar age). These young men are also taught, however, that success with God, as with life, is fundamentally a matter of sales. There is always a risk of young Mormons' concluding that packaging is more important than product.

> As Mitt Romney learned during his two-year mission in France in the 1960s, young Mormon men are taught that success with God, as with life, is fundamentally a matter of sales. There is always a risk of young Mormons' concluding that packaging is more important than product.

A not-insignificant number of the evangelical readers of this essay are now, I take it, solemnly nodding their heads, true, true, very true, how true, all true; quivering and twitching with the sure knowledge, the Text Message from God, that Mormonism is the cult they always thought it was and a shallow one at that. Yet the worship of sales and marketing is not exactly unknown among the numerous evangelicals who promiscuously deride Mormonism as some kind of weird, even dangerous, sect but who themselves gather weekly to—well, what? Sing their country-rockified, feel-good, self-help-book ballads, lovingly serviced with the Word of the Therapeutic God by blow-dried yet humble, down-home yet suburban preachers whose cavernous megachurches resemble nothing so much as the Wal-Mart of the soul on sale. And you ridicule Mormons? One need not be Christopher Hitchens to think that if there is something funny about Mormons, there is something funnier about a certain brand of evangelicals' condescending to them.

Although I once three decades ago served a Mormon mission in Peru, and am proud that I did, I am not a Mormon believer and have not been for a very long time. I hold no brief for the religion. On the contrary, I gave it up because I found I could not continue to say I believed a religion that had been rash enough to make many historical claims, the testability of which was not safely back in the mists of time in the way that protects Christian belief and worldly reason from meeting up to implode like matter and antimatter. The usual thing for a Mormon intel-

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lectual under such circumstances is to discover the beauty of postmodernism and its flexibility about rationality and empirical truth, but I'd rather stick with regular old modernity and the Enlightenment even if they don't grant me complete freedom to believe seemingly contradictory things. The same goes for Mike Huckabee and his Bible fabulism. Yet neither is this an antireligious brief in the style of Hitchens and Richard Dawkins, who make breathless arguments as though they were the world's first skeptics. There *are* very serious arguments, arguments I embrace, that preserve the possibility of religious belief on the basis of mystical experience. Unfortunately they are not available to rescue Romney's faith in events claimed to have happened in historical time in the Western Hemisphere. And they are also not available to rescue Huckabee's followers from their Bible literalism.

And yet, while an unbeliever in Mormonism, I hold the Latter-Day Saint church no ill will—unlike many lapsed Mormons, I'm neither embarrassed nor appalled by it. I rather admire it; I just find its central claims not at all believable. Mormonism not Christian? I am indifferent to the charge; if Mormonism was best understood at some point long ago in the past as perhaps a Christian fertility cult, it has been moving systematically toward the Protestant mean for an equally long period of time. And if our sects are to be thus put under the microscope, then perhaps evangelical Protestantism is best understood as a syncretic cargo cult promising self- and relational-fulfillment through Jesus, a religious movement marching relentlessly forward to embrace a secular culture of therapy in the name of the Nazarene. For this the saints suffered to be torn to pieces by wild beasts and submitted to the flames?

Salt Lake Temple at night

JOSEPH SOHM / VISIONS OF AMERICA / CORBIS

As to the question of cults, well, the traditional reference is to cult of personality—yet Mormonism ended its cult of personality with the deaths of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young some 150 years ago in favor of today's thoroughly modern corporate church, which brings its own problems, but the mad domination of a charismatic cult of personality is not among them. Is it not evangelical Christianity, rather, with its lack of hierarchical authority and discipline, constituted of individual charismatic preachers vying for the fickle attention of crowds, that is today most susceptible to the charge of cults of personality, at least living ones? And is its leading contender at this moment not one Huckabee of Little Rock, who enthralls the crowds with his musings that he is favored of Providence? Who is this Jesus of Nazareth that I should worship his servant Huckabee and offer him my vote?

If I sound irritated at the bigoted attitudes among the lumpen evangelicals—if I sound irritated to discover that an astonishing number of my fellow citizens—30 percent or so, we are told—say they will not vote for a devout Mormon, no matter what his positions or policies, *solely* on account of his religion; or that Christian voters should

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not offer support however indirect to supposed cults, or that America must have a "Christian" president. Well, did I say *irritated*? I understate; furious. Specifically: Instead of a sweet smell among that saving remnant in Iowa, let there be a stink among the pigsties and factory farms of the faithful, instead of a girdle a rent, and instead of well set hair baldness, and instead of a stomacher a girding of sackcloth, and a burning instead of beauty: and may the Lord smite them with a scab, the crown of the head of the 30 percent of Zion: *the Lord* shall discover their secret parts. (Isaiah 3:17, 24; Bk. Morm. 2 Nephi 13.)

And if I, an ex-Mormon, am furious, I only wonder what actual Mormons think in the secret places of their hearts. The bigotry that has accompanied Huckabee's rise has certainly shifted my view of evangelicals. Am I the only one to find tiresome the endless trope among Christians of this country that they wish they could have (wholesome, good hearted) Mormons without (cultish, anti-Christian) Mormonism? My former *confrères* among the Mormons apparently do not count as Christian, yet somehow feel themselves bound by their allegiance to the teachings of the Nazarene to turn the other cheek and meekly suffer these attacks upon their spiritual fitness to participate in the public square. Admirably Christian, I suppose. I myself propose that Huckabee be horse-whipped in the square of public reason and turned out of politics so he can get on with writing *The Seven-Day Diet of Creation* and *Mary Magdalene Got Skinny for Jesus and You Can Too*.

Numerous evangelicals promiscuously deride Mormonism as some kind of weird, even dangerous, sect but themselves gather weekly to sing their country-rockified, feel-good, self-help-book ballads, lovingly serviced with the Word of the Therapeutic God by blow-dried yet humble, down-home yet suburban preachers whose cavernous mega-churches resemble nothing so much as the Wal-Mart of the soul on sale. One need not be Christopher Hitchens to think that if there is something funny about Mormons, there is something funnier about a certain brand of evangelicals' condescending to them.

Christian bigotry, in other words—and not the predictable bigotry of the NPR cohort, the Christians having saved secular liberals the trouble—led up to Mitt Romney's December 6 religion speech. I don't doubt that Romney had always planned to give something like it, just because his consultants would presumably have told him that it would make him Kennedyesque. But Huckabee likely forced him to do it sooner rather than later and shoot his spiritual wad for Iowa rather than South Carolina. Romney having done so and yet Huckabee still surging, let us now pause to reason together and soberly consider what damage the evangelical goading and Romney's response have wrought upon the possibility of pluralism of belief in political America.

The issue which the evangelicals profligately put on the table, and which Romney inadequately answered, is this. The Constitution prohibits religious tests for taking office. Individual voters are free, of course, in the secrecy of the voting booth, to take account of whatever they feel like, including such morally unworthy criteria as race and religion. Candidates are likewise free to campaign on their religion, even on their religious bigotry, and have done so throughout the history of the Republic. But that still leaves open the question of what voters who aspire to goodness and virtue ought to allow themselves to inquire of a candidate for public office, and in particular, the presidency. What, if any, content of doctrine ought a candidate have to explain about his or her religion in the public square as a condition of being elected? And what, if anything, ought to be regarded by an ethical citizenry to be a matter of private belief and therefore outside the bounds of public inquiry?

The answer offered by Huckabee's presidential bid is plain enough. At least in principle, it's *all-in*. Every particle of belief is in-bounds and subject to inquiry and debate. There are apparently limits to "all-in" even for Huckabee; at this moment they happen to be his church sermons, which his campaign has refused to release publicly and one wonders why. And when Huckabee's speculation that Mormons might "believe that Jesus and the devil are brothers" was aired in the *New York Times*, he was embarrassed enough to apologize to Romney, saying "I don't think your being a Mormon ought to make you more or less qualified for being a president." Nice to have that cleared up.

But why have a "no religious tests" principle in the first place? Why shouldn't every jot and tittle of doctrine be subject to public scrutiny? Would this not serve to give us more information about those who would be our leaders and rulers and, anyway, shouldn't we seek leaders who are,

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Lakewood, a non-denominational Christian church in Houston, is the most mega of the megachurches, with 47,000 weekly attendees.

JOSEPH SOHM / VISIONS OF AMERICA / CORBIS

as Huckabee apparently believes of himself, beneficiaries of Providence? Shouldn't we want to elect the winners of the Providential lottery?

And note that on this matter, atheistic rationalists and religious overbelievers join hands to say, *all-in*. A Hitchens, after all, would say that the electorate deserves to know the full irrationality of a candidate, and that is best expressed in his or her religious beliefs, even apparently private ones. (He would say this, and has said it: "Phooey," writes Hitchens, "to the false reticence of the press and to the bogus sensitivities that underlie it.") Just as it is not considered irrelevant to know if one believes that space aliens came to Roswell, New Mexico, or has views on Area 51—shades of Dennis Kucinich?—a candidate's views on the Virgin Birth or transubstantiation or creationism are likewise relevant to making an informed electoral choice as to a candidate's fundamental rationality. Most of us think that Hitchens goes way too far—still, does anyone believe it was truly irrelevant to the public trust that Nancy Reagan consulted an astrologer on weighty matters of public policy? Well, so too with Focus on the Family, although the issue of who might provide better advice remains in doubt.

The long-standing demurral in Anglo-American history against "all-in" sprang from prudence—it was the answer from Elizabeth I on, and the traditional answer of anyone who had to rule a religiously divided kingdom. The alternative, after all, might be, and all too often was, civil war. Prudence counsels toleration insofar as politically possible. Yet toleration is much more than simply a consequence of prudence. Like forbearance, to which it is closely related, religious tolerance is genuinely a virtue and not simply a useful political practice. The reason is that religious toleration in the liberal tradition recognizes (as Hitchens does not) that religion both is, and is not, a matter of rationality and cognitive propositions testable according to the criteria of reason.

This is one of the most urgent recognitions in political culture today, and it is enormously troubling that these stakes have not been put squarely on the table in this debate among Christian pretenders to the presidency. It finally goes to the heart, that is, not of how society deals with Mormons or with evangelicals, but rather with the precedent being established in this dialogue for how American political society will treat with Islam and Muslims. The stakes for a liberal society could not be higher—or seemingly less evident in the discourse of the interlocutors.

It is therefore all the more unfortunate that the issue of religious tolerance should arise in a morally and intellectually underwhelming debate between unworthy Christian evangelicals and an opportunistic Mormon

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politician. They are not worthy of it, but the debate is emphatically taking place. On the one hand, religion is a set of contestable cognitive propositions—not necessarily finally assessable, because of subjectivities—but still a matter of rationality, and beliefs that could, in principle, be accepted as right, or come to be seen as wrong and then changed. Changed within the religion—as with Mormonism and its earlier racial doctrines, for example, even if change requires appeal to such rhetorical devices as gradual reinterpretation of sacred texts and practices or even divine revelation rather than rational discourse. Or, if not within the religion, then changed in extreme cases from without by rational discourse resulting in regulation by the state—as with Mormons and polygamy. If this were all there were to religion, the arguments for outside rational revision of it—apart from prudence and civil war—would be considerable.

On the other hand, we also recognize that religion is more than merely a set of rational and therefore mutable doctrines subject to rational scrutiny. It is also an affective identity in considerable measure acquired as part of who one is. In that sense and to that extent, it is accidental and immutable in the way that skin color, race, and ethnicity are accidental and immutable. It is therefore not merely of prudence, but of morality, that good people seek to avoid, unless for extraordinarily strong and publicly accessible reasons, putting a person to a test that forces them to forsake characteristics that make them who they are (or which forces them to contemplate civil war in defense of who they are).

On the one hand, religion has been regarded as something that can be shaped by rational discourse and necessarily sometimes even the application of political and state power. An individual in this light must consider the rationality of his or her religious beliefs and subject them to reason. On the other hand, religion also has an accidental and immutable quality to it which, in the extreme case of one's eternal soul, can force an individual to the most harrowing choice. Liberal toleration has always taken account of both of these things. The canonical instance of the state forcing the issue in the United States was the outlawing of Mormon polygamy in the 19th century—and these were harrowing cases indeed, breaking apart families, even if they were not families recognized by the good Christians of the eastern United States.

Western liberalism has unaccountably decided to treat Islam as a race, ethnicity, or skin color—an immutable characteristic not alterable by believers and therefore not a proper moral basis on which to judge them. The consequence has been, particularly in Europe, to put anything claimed to be Islamic beyond the bounds not merely of rational debate but of public regulation or even public protest. We notably do not treat other religions this way.

Despite this history, Western liberalism has unaccountably decided to treat Islam and Muslims—not just Islamism or so-called "political Islam," but Islam as such—as though only one prong of religiosity mattered, the immutable part. Islam is treated as a race, ethnicity, or skin color—an immutable characteristic not alterable by believers and therefore not a proper moral basis on which to judge them. The consequence has been, particularly in Europe, to put anything claimed to be Islamic beyond the bounds not merely of rational debate but of public regulation or even public protest.

We notably do not treat other religions this way. One of the marvels of left-liberalism is to watch its willingness to kick around Catholics over progressivism's must-have list of social issues while taking a quite hands-off attitude toward Muslim atrocities. Consider that Columbia University president Lee Bollinger invited Iran's Ahmadinejad for such a tough little chat that 70 Columbia faculty afterwards scolded the witless Bollinger for his incivility, which was followed a few weeks later by the hanging in Iran of Makwan Mouloudzadeh for homosexual acts he allegedly committed at age 13: His blood is spattered on their accommodating hands. Yet, curiously, they don't see it that way. The reason, fundamentally, is that they have accepted that while Catholicism is subject to publicly reasoned scrutiny and even regulation, Islam is not. This is not to mention the profound fear of Western liberals, cautiously expressed as multicultural accommodation, of saying no to religionists who, when they take offense, might not merely write angry essays like this one, but embrace beheading their enemies.

Multiculturalism, as it has infected and diseased once-liberal institutions, is a very long way from the liberal virtue of toleration, and it has undermined toleration in the public sphere. Toleration seeks to recognize that, as far as a broad and liberal interpretation of private liberty can go, virtuous people forbear wherever possible from demanding that religious people choose between their public self and their god. HenryVIII was an "all-in"

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kind of monarch, and from a strictly rationalist understanding, one could see his point, loyalty and legitimacy not being irrelevant to government, especially when overturning a whole social and cultural order. Thomas More thought, in proto-liberal fashion, that he could distinguish between public self and private self, at least sufficiently to save his neck, but he was wrong. Yet any understanding of religion that fails to recognize both of these characteristics is of necessity illiberal.

Now consider Mitt Romney's speech and the answer he gave to the matter of religious tests. Leave aside the whining secularists who complain that Romney left no place for unbelievers in the Republic. Correct and not of unconcern by any means, but frankly far less important than the question of multiculturalism; and anyway, one may trust left secularists to look after their interests in such matters. No, the much more important matter was that Romney announced what might be called, appallingly, "conservative multiculturalism"—indeed, a form of conservative moral relativism. If the demand of the evangelicals was *all-in*, then his answer was *all-out*.

To be sure, there was something good and liberal in part of his answer, and we should start with that. Romney said—correctly as a matter of deep liberalism—that for him to give representations as to the content of his faith would make him a representative of that faith, rather than of the people, who are of many faiths. To do so would be to head down the path of communalism, a political space defined not by a religiously neutral public sphere but by a division accepted as reasonably legitimate consisting of groups—religious, ethnic, whatever—that have claims on behalf of their immutably identified members. This is, by the way, the relatively humane (in historical perspective), but altogether illiberal political order of the Ottoman Empire. It is what many Muslims from those historical lands appear to think would be the best and natural political order in the lands to which they have emigrated—Canada, for example (which anyway has its own powerfully illiberal forces driving toward group-identity communalism), and, increasingly, Britain. It is not—at least not so far—the American way, and Romney was right firmly to reject it.

But he did so, unfortunately, in a typically Romney-like way, with a corrupt little wink-and-nod to his evangelical inquisitors—oh, but don't worry, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the Savior of mankind," etc.; just don't ask me about Mormon underwear. It is corrupt not because it is untrue, but because it aims to let him eat his cake and have it, too. He rejected demands to explain his faith, but did so while letting his interlocutors know that he was really one of them. Too clever by half, in the end, because they will not actually believe him, but this is what comes of positions of moral conviction devised by management consultants.

The "all-out" answer that Romney gave was the denial that citizens might ever legitimately and ethically demand to know the content of religious doctrines professed by a candidate for public office. ("Each religion has its own unique doctrines and history. These are not bases for criticism but rather a test of our tolerance.") It is multiculturalist because it essentially treats all private beliefs as immutable and beyond reason, and because it says that to propose to subject any of them to public scrutiny of reason is an act of intolerance akin to racism. It is a position traditionally asserted by the left on behalf of its identity-politics constituencies. It is dismaying, to say the least, that Romney would claim it for his own to deny the legitimacy of all questions.

It is, moreover, relativist in implication. Toleration is not an assertion of relativism. It is, rather, the forbearance from judging and acting on judgments in the public sphere that one might well believe oneself entitled to make in private. Toleration entails the suspension of public disbelief, or at least political action thereupon, about matters that one might nonetheless consider well within the realm of private moral judgment. Relativism, by contrast, is denial of grounds for judging at all. They could not be more different—and, crucially, relativism removes the possibility of toleration because it removes the possibility of reasoned judgment.

Romney's "all-out" stance goes well beyond a plea for liberal toleration to an assertion of genuine relativism and the denial of the very possibility of moral judgment. And all of this in the midst of a lecture on the decline of religion in Europe. But of course it is not declining, it is rising in the form of an Islam whose liberal commitments are in doubt at best. Romney answered as a Mormon looking for maximum room to maneuver, but seemingly without any thought whatsoever to the institutional settlement implicitly proposed, affecting not just Mormons and evangelicals, but Catholics and Buddhists and Muslims and Hindus, as well as the unbelievers and atheists he could not bring himself to mention.

Convenient and selfish—because it means not having to answer while giving him the ability to convict questioners of posing illegitimate religious tests. But here is the problem for the commonweal. There will come a moment when questions *will* have to be asked of a candidate for office: What exactly do you, following the requirements of your religion, believe about jihad, about political violence for religious ends, about the rights and status of other religions, about apostasy from Islam, about the rights of women, about the rights of gays not to be beaten up in the streets of Amsterdam or hanged in Iran, about free speech and blasphemy, and above all about separation of religion

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and state? Not all these questions, of course, would be directed uniquely at Muslim candidates—there are important questions there that one might ask of evangelicals, Mormons, Catholics, and others. Of a devoutly Buddhist candidate, for example, one might want to know about his commitment to doctrines of nonviolence, while considering questions about reincarnation neither here nor there. But the historical and political reality today is that there is one religion in which those questions are genuinely urgent, for the religion, for its adherents, for the rest of us.

Unthinkingly, conservative multiculturalist Romney has just announced in advance, on behalf of all of us, that the perfectly legitimate answer is blandly to respond, ours is the religion of peace, you are effectively a racist for asking those kinds of questions, and we will file a lawsuit in Canada or the United Kingdom against you for discrimination using bottomless funds from Saudi Wahhabis. Insofar as anyone thinks, or hopes, that Romney's speech represents a new settlement of the religion question like the Kennedy speech four decades ago—well, it is frankly hard to imagine a worse outcome short of Romney saying with a shrug, "Paris is worth a Mass" and publicly converting to evangelical Protestantism. It is dangerous and wrong, for a whole series of reasons that unsurprisingly elude the secular, multicultural left, which is why it must be taken up by conservatives in the wake of this disastrous *conservative* foray over the cliff.

It is altogether understandable that a minority religion with strange practices and beliefs would like relativism in the public sphere. As a devout Mormon teenager in the 1970s, nothing was more attractive to me than the period's fashionable relativism. Nobody could say anything one way or the other about my religion. It was my own thing just as they had theirs; they smoked and drank and did many drugs, while I didn't. All cool. I am far from unsympathetic to Romney's plight, in other words, yet "all-out" cannot be the right answer. The issue then is: If neither *all-in* nor *all-out* is the answer, are there principles that can help define what religious questions should be in-bounds and what should be out of bounds in a tolerant, liberal polity?

It will always be messy. There will always be room for loud argument over whether something is legitimately in or out. But here are some provisional ground rules, offered as practical rules of thumb, not as academically defensible philosophy. First, for something to be "in," there does have to be a connection to governance, politics, and the public sphere. This is the most traditional form of American religious toleration in politics. A Buddhist's belief in reincarnation ought to be neither here nor there; a Mormon's conception of the Savior likewise; and a Jew's refusal to regard Jesus as Lord likewise. But what about things that are "in"? Religious doctrines of sanctity of life, for example, touching issues of public law and policy such as abortion, stem cells, or capital punishment must surely be on the table. But in what sense?

The publicly reasoned parts of these issues are not the problem; the problem is what to say about religious values that a candidate cannot expect his or her constituents necessarily to share, but which some or all voters might think relevant to public office. To what extent can one inquire of a candidate's religious doctrines? If the candidate puts it on the table as religious doctrine, then fair game, certainly. But what if it is not introduced by the candidate as something that is no longer private? In the first place, it seems to me, we should *presume* that even where the belief at issue is a religious one, deriving from a religious doctrine which is part of a faith, the locus of questioning should be on the *person* and not on the faith as such. It should presume to be about the personal convictions of the candidate as an individual, rather than corporate inquiries, so to speak, about the faith itself. This preserves at least provisionally the liberal separation of public and private, but it emphatically does not deprive the public of the chance to explore what a candidate's private convictions are insofar as they relate to public issues but arise from private judgments. Even if one disagrees with a candidate's position and is prepared to vote against a person on that basis, liberalism counsels in favor of doing so on the basis of the candidate's personal convictions, rather than communal affiliation, even where the personal conviction arises from religion. A candidate may correctly refuse to speak for the faith, while still being properly pressed to answer about his or her personal convictions that might, or might not, arise from such faith.

For Huckabee, perhaps the most important in this category is his creationism, because of its public policy implications if carried forward with any conviction; it is therefore a matter for thorough public discussion, starting with what he thinks follows, if anything, for public policy from a belief in a literal Adam and Eve. Some matters that, in some residual sense, remain part of the religion—the more robust parts of Deuteronomy, for example—revised and reinterpreted over time so as to no longer be a matter of contemporary controversy, ought to remain "out" altogether, unless a candidate's particular religious affiliations, the sermons he has preached, the congregation he attends, the pastors to whom he has given attention and support, give reason to believe something different. For Mormons, polygamy was given up a very long time ago; it seems to me no longer legitimately on the table. Likewise relations of church and state, in which Mormonism, after many past difficult struggles, accommodated itself to today's under-

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standings. Yet for Islam, at least for parts of it, church and state remain a live issue. Although for some, likely many, Muslim candidates for office, their personal histories (the mosques they attend, the imams to whom they give attention and financial support, or perhaps the fact that, like many Americans and many politicians, they simply are not especially religious even while retaining a religious affiliation) make this not a live question, regardless of other parts of the religion. For others, it might well be an issue, just as it might be for some Christians, some Jews, etc. What is legitimately in and what is out will always be a messy debate, contested loudly by campaigns, sometimes in good faith and often in bad. But these are questions that ought generally to be put as a matter of the personal convictions of a candidate for office, not as a matter of the faith from which they might or might not spring as such.

Even if one disagrees with a candidate's position and is prepared to vote against a person on that basis, liberalism counsels in favor of doing so on the basis of the candidate's personal convictions, rather than communal affiliation, even where the personal conviction arises from religion. A candidate may correctly refuse to speak for the faith, while still being properly pressed to answer about his or her convictions that might, or might not, arise from such faith.

But in that case, is there actually anything where it is justified to inquire of a candidate about a doctrine of faith as such, with a direct connection to the religion as such? Well, were a candidate to put an issue on the table as a religious assertion as such, prepared to act as such, it might thereby be disputed as such. And supposing (quite fantastically) the Catholic bishops were to announce excommunication as the sanction for any Catholic politician voting for abortion funding; and further that a Catholic candidate were to announce that he or she was bound by this on pain of one's immortal soul: It would, it seems to me, be justified to inquire as to the doctrinal content of something which specifically bound the individual to the content of doctrine and the authority of the faith. Fatwas can present similar issues of authority and obligation. Which is really to say, situations may arise that raise fundamental questions of authority and obligation to the faith as such, questions of loyalty and allegiance as between groups that constitute one's identity—commonweal and religious community. This was the fundamental question that Kennedy sought to address 47 years ago (orders from Rome?) and it is a legitimate one for members of a commonwealth to ask of those who would represent them *insofar*—but only insofar—as there are legitimate reasons to think that a leader might, for profound religious reasons, be caught between these two corporate identities.

These situations arise less frequently today than they did in the time of Henry VIII because we moderns are less religious—but also because, crucially, within our religions we have largely accepted the essential function of private conscience to set limits on religious authority and obligation. Private conscience fulfills this role precisely because, for us as moderns, it is a faculty of both the liberal mind and the religious soul; it began with the Reformation but has spread to every long-standing American religious tradition, Catholics, Mormons, Jews. But that is not necessarily true of all religionists of every faith, creed, denomination, and sect. And therefore the issue is squarely this: We as citizens are unsure as to whether a relatively new religious group in this political community, Islam and Muslims, or at least important subsets of the religion, have accepted the contemporary American understanding of public and private, church and state, simultaneous membership in political community and religion. Millions plainly have, and while they might be angry at the suggestion that it is an issue, because the implication too easily is that it is an issue for them, the fact is that for other adherents of Islam worldwide, it is. It is not illegitimate to address that fact. Indeed, we must address that fact, and directly. Assimilation and full membership in a political community cannot take place if, instead what some have accepted is a multiculturalism that denies any obligation to address the question of loyalty and allegiance, and so elides the deepest nature of membership in a political community.

These are provisional rules, rules of thumb, not hard and fast judgments. But there is a reason I have raised Islam and Muslims as a crucial test in something that might otherwise appear to be a spat between two Christian groups. The historical experience of drawing the Latter-Day Saint church into the political mainstream of this country is not irrelevant to the experience of Muslims and the political evolution of their religion in this country and elsewhere. The Mormon church joined the political mainstream after great difficulty and largely under painful pressure from two powerful forces. There was an exterior motivation exercised by a state that demanded, as the fed-

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eral United States drew ever tighter around it, that it give up practices considered to be issues of genuine public morality—even ones, such as polygamy, that some people today would consider to be purely matters of private inclination and appetite. And there was an interior motivation—partly a matter of the survival of the church as an organized entity, but also from a desire within the church over time not to live apart from the rest of society, but to integrate itself within this country's suburban middle class even while maintaining, in certain matters, its own morality and standards.

These forces have powerfully acted on many cultural and indeed doctrinal matters within the Mormon church, ranging from the status of women to doctrines about race, as has of course been the case with many other American institutions. For Muslims, however, the task is made more difficult by the fact that many as a religious minority and many as immigrants have been trained to believe that to be an American is merely to demand one's group identity rights, and that the glorious essence of being an American is not to seek both individual liberty and our common cause, but to sue for discrimination. They are not alone in that—we can all thank left multiculturalism for doing its best to poison the conceptual well of citizenship—but in today's world, it matters the most for Muslims in the West and in America.

The firm demand of the state for conformity to neutral standards is what—contrary to the claims of the multiculturalists—provides the grounds of liberal toleration. There are many reasons, but the simplest is this: Taken together, the demands of religious groups for ever stronger and expansive special accommodations must eventually result in profound and antagonistic standoffs and conflicts.

The firm demand of the state for conformity to neutral standards is what—contrary to the claims of the multiculturalists—provides the grounds of liberal toleration. There are many reasons, but the simplest is this: Taken together, the demands of religious groups for ever stronger and expansive special accommodations must eventually result in profound and antagonistic standoffs and conflicts. Indeed, we have gone too far with special accommodations for religions that depart from neutral governance. Meanwhile, this country will one day, God willing, elect a Muslim as president. He or she will be not a "Muslim president" in the freighted way some evangelicals mean that phrase, but a Muslim as president, president of all of us. We will also elect Mormons as presidents, Christians as presidents, Jews as presidents, and unbelievers as presidents, etc. What we shall not elect, God also willing, is a "Christian president" or a "Mormon president." That Muslim chief executive will be someone whose loyalty to the country, to its fundamental values, its constitutional faith, even over the claims and pretensions of some Islamic doctrines and beliefs, is unquestioned because, at some point in the past, it *has* been questioned, if not specifically for him or her, then for his religious community in America.

Far from a matter of bigotry, it is precisely what citizens should expect of their leaders, what they should expect their leaders to be willing to demonstrate, and what they should expect of other citizens. For Mormons, the process of gaining that trust took an arduous century or more; what remains is not a question of their loyalty to the commonwealth but the demands of the saving remnant who insist upon a Christian commonwealth. They are wrong. Nevertheless, the necessary questioning, the open questioning that must occur in order for Muslims to take their full place in this country's political society cannot happen under the strictures of multiculturalism, because it rejects the very category of citizen and embraces group identities. It leaves active citizenship stillborn—offering instead a devil's bargain in which Muslims are never really regarded, or regard themselves, as full citizens, while buying them off with special accommodations made by the multiculturalists to a group of people who, in virtue of their religion, are not considered fully rational or responsible under the neutral laws of this nation. This is Europe and we must avoid it; Europe must recover from it. Romney made that task harder for this country by endorsing a multiculturalism that declares all those questions of membership and loyalty and the willingness to put the commonweal ahead of one's identity groups completely off the table insofar as they arise from religion.

The exchange between the Huckabee bigots among the evangelicals, on the one hand, and Romney-the-opportunist, on the other—between assertions of a "Christian presidency" and the dismaying response of "conservative multiculturalism"—might seem to many to be a struggle merely within the loopy, irrational religious backwoods of the Republican party. It is not. It is about this country and the rest of us and our long-term relationship to liberal toleration at its hour of grave need—and that is why Romney's wrong answer to the wrong question is so very, very dispiriting. ♦

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Flight 93 Remembered

While government dithers, Americans build their own memorials

The Union City memorial

By Jonathan V. Last

Union City, California

Last Saturday, America's first major memorial to Flight 93 was dedicated in a small town 20 miles north of San Jose. Set in a park roughly the size of a football field, the memorial is elegantly simple; it would not look out of place on the Mall in Washington. At one end stands a flagpole with hand-painted tiles decorating its base. A gently winding path stretches 135 feet north. Forty rose-colored one-ton granite slabs are arranged along the path, each polished surface engraved with the name, age, and hometown of one of the passengers or crew members of Flight 93. The pathway ends at a circle, where an American sweet-gum is planted and three larger slabs of blue granite stand. One of these bears a list of donors to the project, one tells the tale of Flight 93, and the third gives a brief account of the memorial itself. But the story of Union City's Flight 93 memorial is worth telling in full, because—unlike most serious public monuments—it was conceived, paid for, and built by private citizens.

The idea for the memorial began with Michael Emerson, a 44-year-old retired Marine who lives in nearby Hayward. Emerson, who creates financial trusts for a living, is something of an enthusiast. He's a devoted *Star Trek* fan whose home boasts an impressive array of sports memorabilia, as well as a collection of swords used in films from *Spartacus* to *Rio Grande*. Emerson had no personal connection to 9/11, but was struck by the heroism of the passengers and crew of Flight 93.

In 2002, Emerson began corresponding with Alice Hoglan, the mother of passenger Mark Bingham. He told her that he wanted to build a memorial to Flight 93. He sketched out a design and planned to solicit donations and volunteers to build it—all he needed was a city willing to host it. Emerson approached Hayward first, but the city

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DAN SWIGER PHOTOGRAPHY

council wasn't interested. He looked for a nearby town with a suitable space and a good parks department, and he quickly settled on Union City. It had a healthy commitment to public parks, and one park in particular, Sugar Mill Landing, looked promising.

Situated at the corner of two major roads and just across from a gargantuan shopping center, Sugar Mill Landing wasn't much more than a thin, rectangular strip of green space buffering a residential neighborhood from the vast expanse of big box stores and chain restaurants. It was the perfect size for the memorial Emerson envisioned. When he approached the city, both the mayor, Mark Green, and the city council were receptive, provided Union City wouldn't have to spend any money on the memorial. They told Emerson that if he could hammer out the details and raise a $50,000 bond to pay for upkeep, he could build the memorial at Sugar Mill Landing. They even recommended a landscape architect, Robert Mowat, who volunteered his time to help Emerson create a design.

Emerson sent another letter to Alice Hoglan, explaining his plans and asking that she forward it to the rest of the Flight 93 families. And then he went begging, faxing requests for donations all over the country. In September 2004, Jim Boyd, who owns a quarry in Elberton, Georgia, received one of Emerson's faxes. He volunteered to procure and ship the granite and to find stonecutters and engravers who would donate their time to carve it. Tom Albanese, who has owned a concrete business in San Jose with his brother since 1948, volunteered to supply 200 tons of concrete. Barry Luboviski, an official with the local AFL-CIO, stood ready to organize hundreds of union volunteers to do the construction work. Many others lined up to donate time and equipment, too, from sod to expensive lighting. And Emerson and his girlfriend, Mary Greenlee, spent scores of hours outside the local Wal-Mart soliciting donations for the upkeep fund.

By October 2004, the project was solid enough that the city council was ready to approve it. But the day before

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The memorial chapel in Shanksville, Pennsylvania

FLIGHT 93 MEMORIAL CHAPEL / ALPHONSE T. MASCHERINO

the council meeting, two Flight 93 families called the city manager to voice concerns about Emerson and the project. At the meeting the next evening, some of the Flight 93 families showed up to complain. "We just want to know what's going to be said about our loved ones," said Carole O'Hare, whose mother, Hilda Marcin, was on Flight 93. The local Fremont *Argus* reported that O'Hare "said some of the families were upset because Emerson contacted them directly by email and did not follow protocol for contacting them."

The protocol for such communication, evidently, is not to contact family members directly, but instead to go through a group called the National Organization for Victim Assistance in Alexandria, Virginia. Ken Nacke, the chair of the Flight 93 Families Memorial Committee, was equally disturbed. "I wish there were a memorial in every state," Nacke said, "but this gentleman didn't reach out to all the family members."

In a *San Francisco Chronicle* story about the council meeting, Jennifer Price, president of Flight 93 Families, Inc., was quoted as lamenting, "This was the first we heard about [the Union City memorial]; he's never officially contacted our board." Price, whose parents were on Flight 93, explained, "The key is a process that includes all family members, one that is done respectfully and doesn't make people upset or uncomfortable." The same *Chronicle* story reported that "feelings were bruised further when a *Chronicle* columnist wrote about the project and mentioned five passengers who stormed the hijackers, leading some to believe that Emerson's memorial would highlight only them."

Not all of the families were upset, but the city council postponed the vote nonetheless. Emerson did his best to reconcile with the unhappy families and assuage their concerns. On December 14, 2004, the council unanimously approved the memorial.

There were delays and problems. As of April 2006, Emerson had only $15,000 of the $50,000 he needed for the bond. When Robert Mowat, the architect, agreed also to act as the construction manager, however, the city lowered its requirement to $20,000. (Emerson was eventually able to put $28,000 into a trust for the memorial's upkeep, leaving the city with virtually no ongoing costs.) Initially, the dedication was planned for Memorial Day 2006, but 6 of the 40 rose stones were incorrectly measured—a mistake noticed only after they had been delivered to Union City.

Emerson found a local engraver willing to fix them, but he was from a nonunion shop. The union workers volunteering on the memorial refused to continue if Emerson used him. So the stones were shipped back to Georgia for repair, causing further delay. Tension grew between the unions and Emerson; bad feelings developed as well with Mowat and the city manager. By the time of the dedication ceremony, many of the parties on the stage together were barely on speaking terms. Mowat and Luboviski pointedly did not mention Emerson's name in their speeches. But at least the rift with the families had been repaired. Many families made the trip to the dedication, some coming from as far as Florida. Carole O'Hare even spoke at the ceremony, quoting lyrics from the Enya song "Fallen Embers" in her remarks.

For all of this, the memorial itself bears few scars. And while no one would confuse it with Lincoln's grand temple on the Mall, the Union City memorial has a certain majesty. Michael Emerson set out to build a tribute to the heroes of Flight 93; he succeeded on a scale that no one had reason to expect.

Emerson was not the first person to create a permanent tribute to Flight 93. That distinction goes to Father Alphonse Mascherino, who in 2002 built the Flight 93 Memorial Chapel in Shanksville, Pennsylvania, just three miles from the crash site.

A retired Catholic priest, Father Al was living in the nearby town of Somerset on September 11, 2001. Like many residents of the county, he sprang into action on 9/11, volunteering to help feed and house the hundreds of local, state, and federal workers who descended on

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Shanksville. During his drives to and from town, Father Al noticed a rundown building on Stutzmantown Road. It was the Mizpah Evangelical Lutheran Church, built in 1901. The church had operated for 68 years, until it was dissolved in 1969 and converted into a seed distribution center. And in October 2001, the property was for sale.

As Father Al explained in an essay about the chapel's founding, "reflecting on the experience of the Heroes on board Flight 93, in their prayer together, it seemed that the simplest way to memorialize faith, and especially the faith manifested by the Heroes on board the plane, was to do it privately." So he bought the old Mizpah Church.

It took some doing. The asking price was $18,900; Father Al cobbled together $100 to hold the property and then tried to figure out how to come up with the down payment. He began selling whatever possessions he could. After two months, he had $1,500. Finally, his brother-in-law, an antiques dealer, bought his extensive collection of Christmas ornaments for $6,400, giving him enough to cover closing costs and the down payment.

At noon on Christmas Day 2001, Father Al went down to the basement of his mother's house and began sketching out his vision for the old church. In a Handelesque fury, he worked for 24 hours straight, compiling detailed plans for a renovation that would turn the old church into a chapel dedicated to the heroes of Flight 93.

He closed on the property a few days later and set to work restoring it by himself. There was only one electrical outlet, which had to provide power for both lighting and tools. The walls and ceiling needed to be torn out and rebuilt. There wasn't much money. Father Al was buying supplies $50 at a time at the local lumber yard, whenever he could spare the cash. One day the manager noticed the priest who kept coming back and buying bits of this and that. He asked what sort of project he was working on. Father Al told him about his plans for the chapel. The manager called Maggie Hardy Magerko, who owns the 84 Lumber Company, and relayed the story.

Hardy Magerko immediately gave Father Al a $23,000 grant toward materials for the restoration. That August, she came by the church to visit and saw how truly desperate the condition of the place was. She sent out a call to carpenters and craftsmen and put a small army of professional builders at Father Al's disposal. They worked around the clock for ten days, using the sketches he had drawn on Christmas as their blueprints. As Father Al tells it, at 4:00 P.M. on September 10, 2002, "the artist applying gold leaf paint to the trim in the sanctuary put his brush down and the work was complete." The Flight 93 Memorial Chapel was finished.

The story of Flight 93 is told on two slabs of blue granite.

DAN SWIGER PHOTOGRAPHY

The Union City memorial and Flight 93 chapel have more in common than their private origins. There are people who view the passengers and crew of Flight 93 as victims to be mourned. And then there are people like Michael Emerson and Father Al who insist that these are heroes to be celebrated.

The same contrast can be seen between the private projects and the government's own memorial plans. The proposed national memorial in Shanksville has yet to break ground, but it will commemorate Flight 93 in a less-than-triumphal manner. It's mainly a landscaped park, including a "healing" wetlands area and 40 groves of trees laid out in a giant circle. Union City's purposeful wall of stones couldn't be more different.

At the entrance to the federal memorial will be a "Tower of Voices" that will feature 40 wind chimes designed to whisper constantly on behalf of the departed. The Flight 93 Memorial Chapel has a voice, too, a half-ton bell cast in 1860. It was donated by a friend, and Father Al has rechristened it "Thunder Bell."

Thunder Bell hangs in a new 44-foot-high steel-frame belfry and can be rung by anyone who visits the Flight 93 Memorial Chapel. Its sound can be heard at the crash site, three miles away. ♦

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Alive and Kicking

Reports of the demise of social conservatism are greatly exaggerated

By Jeffrey Bell

As recently as a month or two ago, political analysts were drafting obituaries for social conservatism in America. They reasoned that for the first time in several decades, no viable, credentialed social conservative was seeking the Republican presidential nomination. They noted that in the absence of such a candidate, some social conservatives were lining up behind a former Northeastern governor, Mitt Romney, who had until recently been a social liberal. Far more surprisingly, other social conservatives were said to be preparing to back former New York mayor Rudolph Giuliani, not only a supporter of legal abortion, domestic partnership benefits for same-sex couples, and embryo-destructive stem cell research, but one who had politely but emphatically made clear he would not modify any of those positions to win support in either the primaries or the general election.

Almost every national poll this year—including, according to the compilation kept by Real Clear Politics, the last 39 in a row, covering the period from mid-September until the string was broken last week—had Giuliani leading the GOP field. And cross-tabulations of these same polls suggested that at least a plurality of social conservatives were planning to support Giuliani in the primaries, either because they wanted a nominee strong enough to defeat Democratic front-runner Hillary Clinton, or because social conservatives' desire for strong leadership in the war on terror "trumped" their beliefs on social issues. What kind of future was in store for a political persuasion willing, for whatever reason, to turn over the keys of its main political vehicle, the Republican party, to an unapologetic opponent of its core principles?

It was a reasonable question, some version of which may still need to be answered a month or a year from now. But the rise of former Arkansas governor Mike Huckabee and a simultaneous sharp decline of the Giuliani candidacy in Iowa and other states with large numbers of socially conservative voters make at least one thing clear: Social conservatism continues to exist as a mass movement that cares very much about its core beliefs. Supporters of this movement may have some unusually tough decisions to make in the 2008 presidential cycle, but anyone analyzing American politics under the premise that social conservatism will soon disappear—or that these days it amounts to little more than an eccentric sideshow—is very likely to be proved wrong.

There are several things about social conservatism that have made it easy to underestimate. For one thing, it is still comparatively new. Fifty years ago, the term was seldom used. Then as now there were many millions of Americans with conservative moral and social values, but there was no such thing as a mass political movement or political philosophy built around such values.

This was in part because social institutions like marriage and moral ideas like the sanctity of unborn human life had not yet come under broad-based assault, and therefore had not become a factor in the national political debate. As recently as the 1950s, the divide between liberals and conservatives had nothing to do with whether marriage should be redefined or abortion should be treated as a constitutional right. Beginning in the 1960s, when politics did begin to call moral and social values into question, it generated dismay and protests among holders of traditional values.

Similar challenges and social changes—the legalization of abortion and the enactment of "no fault" (unilateral) divorce, among others—were taking place at the same time in Western Europe, and dismay was expressed there as well. But nowhere else did this dismay lead to anything remotely resembling the social conservative political movement of the United States. Conservative parties in Europe largely capitulated to social liberalism and continued to base their critique of the left on economic and foreign-policy issues.

Jeffrey Bell, a Washington consultant, is author of Populism and Elitism: Politics in the Age of Equality *(Regnery 1992), and is writing* Social Conservatism: The Movement that Polarized American Politics, *to be published by Encounter Books in 2008.*

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Japan's social revolution happened a generation earlier—abortion was legalized there in 1948—while the social/moral revolution in newly affluent Ireland is still playing itself out. But the bottom line is the same: The United States is (so far) the only First World democracy to have a social-conservative political movement of any consequence. The loneliness of American social conservatism on the global democratic scene is a second factor that renders it easy to regard lightly, as a kind of parochial oddity, destined soon to succumb to the secularizing, relativistic trend that has pretty much triumphed in every other affluent democracy.

The third major element that often makes social conservatism look anemic is the reluctance of Republican elites, including conservative ones, to talk about social issues. Even George W. Bush, the most influential and effective ally of social conservatives in national politics since Ronald Reagan, looks uncomfortable discussing such issues as abortion and same-sex marriage. In his 2000 campaign, Bush checked all the right boxes of the social conservative agenda, but preferred in campaign appearances to talk about mobilizing faith-based groups to help solve social problems. This appealed to social conservatives and served as a kind of substitute for putting rhetorical meat on the bare bones of Bush's social-conservative issue commitments. Moreover, most other Republican leaders have shown even less willingness to talk about social issues than has President Bush.

But there are several offsetting factors at work that have made and will continue to make social conservatism hard to marginalize. For one thing, social conservatism is the only mass-based political persuasion that fully believes in the core ideas of the American founding. It has taken over that role from parties, professions, and ideologies that used to perform it, and as a result it is touching a deep chord with millions of American voters.

Most social conservatives believe that the central principle asserted in the Declaration of Independence is true: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness." While almost all Americans respect these words at least as a sentiment or metaphor, it is a fact that most—not all—social conservatives believe them to be literally true, while most—not all—opponents of social conservatism do not believe them to be literally true.

ROUSSEAU BY CHARON AFTER BOUCHET; CORBIS / GIANNI DAGLI ORTI

WHAT ROUSSEAU HATH WROUGHT

Drawing on the thought of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the early left argued that in the state of nature people are completely free, bound by no laws, and that institutions and laws erected by civilization are, of their nature, repressive.

As long as these key assertions of our nation's founding document continue to be taken literally by many Americans, social conservatism will resonate among Americans in a way that competing philosophies cannot—and in a way that, given the very different founding narratives of most countries in Europe and elsewhere, cannot easily be replicated beyond these shores.

A second factor making social conservatism relevant is a simple fact: The global left today defines itself mainly in terms of social issues rather than economics.

At first it was widely assumed that the collapse of Soviet communism, and of government ownership and/or direction of business as a serious economic recipe, had dealt a devastating, possibly mortal, blow to the left. But after a brief period of licking its wounds the international left found itself far from devastated. The truth is that old-fashioned, state-administered socialism had become something of an albatross for the left, impeding rather than advancing its ability to benefit from the worldwide political and social upheavals of the 1960s.

Indeed, not long after those upheavals peaked in 1968, it became obvious that the enduring, truly revolutionary impact of the 1960s was moral and cultural, not

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economic. By the end of the 1970s a new and adversarial form of politically engaged feminism not only became all but unassailable among North American and European elites, but also took a central political role almost everywhere the left was strong.

The quick recovery of the left from the collapse of socialist economics could not but be surprising to analysts, perhaps especially conservative American ones, who had long been in the habit of defining the left in terms of its push for bigger and bigger government, culminating in socialism or something very like it. And it's undeniable that this push had been a key feature of the left (and of world politics) since the middle of the 19th century.

In their assault on the prevailing order, French revolutionaries adopted brutality and murder as tactics (as with the beheading of King Louis XVI, right). Both before and after Karl Marx, the goal of the left remained the liberation of mankind from traditional institutions and codes of behavior, especially moral codes.

But when it first arose in recognizable form in Europe in the closing decades of the 18th century, the left was primarily about other things. Among these were ending monarchy, eliminating or at least circumscribing the role of traditional religion in society, and liberating humanity from what it saw as repressive institutions. Often included among such institutions was the traditional family, anchored by the Christian ideal of monogamous marriage.

Drawing on aspects of the thought of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the left argued that in the state of nature people are completely free, bound by no laws, and that institutions and laws erected by civilization are, of their nature, a force for repression.

Many of the first-wave leaders of the French Revolution were admirers of the two most celebrated conservative revolutions of the modern age, the Glorious Revolution of 1688-89 in England and the American Revolution, which had just unfolded in the 1770s and 1780s. But in the 1790s the left concluded that early attempts to erect representative assemblies in France were corrupt and, led by Robespierre, it took dictatorial power and began the series of arrests and executions known as the Terror.

Who or what was the left? The term was invented precisely in these years, in the 1790s prior to the Robespierre coup d'état, to specify the side of the National Assembly in Paris on which radicals—the Jacobins and their allies—sat. Rousseau died in 1778, and thus did not live to see these beliefs gain the upper hand and reshape the French Revolution and go on to achieve preeminence in setting the world's political agenda for the ensuing two centuries. But that is what happened.

The striking thing about the history of the left is its singleness of vision amid a breathtaking variety of means. The goal of the left is the liberation of mankind from traditional institutions and codes of behavior, especially moral codes. It seeks a restoration (or achievement) of a state of nature, one of absolute individual liberty—universal happiness without the need for laws.

The proposed political way stations chosen by the left in its drive toward this vision have varied greatly. To name a few: abolition of private property (socialism); prohibition of Christianity and/or propagation by the political elite of a new civil religion to replace it; confiscatory taxation, especially at death; regulation of political speech to limit the ability of certain individuals or classes to affect politics; the takeover of education to instill new values and moral habits in the population; confiscation of privately held firearms; gradual phasing out of the nation-state; displacement of the traditional family in favor of child-rearing by an enlightened governmental elite; and the inversion of sexual morality to elevate recreational sex and reduce the prestige of procreative sex. This is, it must be emphasized, a partial list.

For the last several decades of its political vitality, from roughly the 1950s to the 1980s, Marxism had lost

BEHEADING OF LOUIS XVI, BETTMANN / CORBIS; MARX, STEFANO BIANCHETTI / CORBIS

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its earlier belief in itself as the modern world's logical path to economic efficiency. Faith in Marxism was sustained by its continued credibility as a means to achieve social equality by way of income redistribution, even at the expense of an overall diminution in society's wealth. In a sense, Marxism survived on the plane of social values rather than economics.

Indeed, as John Fonte of the Hudson Institute has pointed out, the "Frankfurt School" of Marxist intellectuals and their ally Antonio Gramsci, who died in one of Mussolini's prisons in the 1930s, long ago sensed the economic weakness of socialism and struggled, with some success, to reorient the left toward what has been called cultural Marxism—the deconstruction of traditional institutions such as church and family, and transfer of power to oppressed or underprivileged classes, races, and genders.

KATY WINN / CORBIS

But this tendency of the left long predated Marxism. It would be instantly recognizable and attractive to the left's visionary founder and first successful politicians, Rousseau and the Jacobins of Paris. They would also recognize American social conservatism as their most implacable enemy.

The final big reason social conservatism isn't going away is the most cold-bloodedly practical of all. Contrary to the stereotype of the GOP "base" as a crazy aunt locked away in the attic, when social issues have come to the fore in *general* elections, Republicans, not Democrats, have invariably benefited. This was particularly striking in the three presidential elections of the 1980s.

In 1980, the nomination of Ronald Reagan was accompanied by the appearance of a pro-life plank in the Republican platform, just as Democrats moved definitively to affirm the right to abortion as a core party value. Economic and foreign-policy crises were central in the 1980 campaign, but abortion and other social issues helped give Reagan unexpectedly large gains among newly energized evangelical voters, and stunning victories in liberal but heavily Catholic states like Massachusetts. In 1984, "religion in politics" dominated the campaign from July through September, with vice presidential nominee Geraldine Ferraro engaging in an extended debate over abortion with New York archbishop John O'Connor, while presidential nominee Walter Mondale accused Reagan of being an "ayatollah" for welcoming socially conservative Protestant clergymen into the public square. This debate coincided with a substantial Democratic decline in the polls in the two most religious sections of the country, the South and the Midwest.

> With state socialism discredited as totalitarian and impoverishing, the left redirected its efforts into direct assaults on traditional institutions such as church and family. Radical feminism, for instance, called for the inversion of sexual morality to elevate recreational sex and reduce the prestige of procreative sex.

In the summer of 1988, Vice President George H.W. Bush, caricatured as a "wimp" and a "lap dog," at one point trailed Massachusetts governor Michael Dukakis by 17 percentage points in a national poll. Bush's campaign manager, Lee Atwater, convinced the vice president to begin attacking Dukakis on a selection of social issues. These included Dukakis's opposition to the death penalty, his opposition to requiring students to recite the Pledge of Allegiance in public-school classrooms, and his membership in the American Civil Liberties Union. Above all, Bush harped on a Dukakis-backed program that awarded extended furloughs to Massachusetts inmates convicted of serious crimes, including one named Willie Horton who used his leave to commit rape and kidnapping in another state.

The social issues had impact, and the election turned. Bush overtook Dukakis and wound up winning by 8 percentage points in the popular vote, carrying the electoral votes of 40 states. In the 1980s, social issues were unquestionably a Republican plus in three out of three general elections. In these elections, Democratic candidates averaged 42 percent of the popular vote and 58 electoral votes.

For various reasons—one of which was intense elite disapproval of the Atwater-injected social issues in the wake of Bush's 1988 victory—social issues did not reappear as major factors in the general elections of 1992 or

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1996, the two victories of Bill Clinton. Whether Bush's faith-based emphasis in 2000 qualified as a reemergence of social issues can be argued either way. But most analysts believed the faith-based issue, combined with Bush's personal testimony on the role of his own faith in overcoming a drinking problem and stabilizing his marriage, proved a net benefit in helping Bush to his narrow Electoral College victory. Social conservatives found themselves with a seat at the presidential strategy table for the first time since the late 1980s. Yet none of this made George W. Bush look any more comfortable talking about abortion or (especially) the new social issue, same-sex marriage.

Then in 2003, two judicial decisions, one at the Federal level (*Lawrence* v. *Texas*) and one in Massachusetts (*Goodridge* v. *Department of Public Health*), made it clear to social conservatives that if left unchecked, judicial elites would before very long (by use of the full faith and credit clause of the U.S. Constitution) make same-sex marriage the law of the land in all 50 states. In 2004, Democratic presidential nominee John Kerry stated that he believed marriage is between a man and a woman, but he vehemently opposed all efforts to lock this belief into federal law, either by constitutional amendment (the proposed Federal Marriage Amendment) or by statute (the Defense of Marriage Act of 1996, signed into law by President Clinton, with Kerry one of only 14 senators voting no).

Social conservatives mobilized, and with aid from sympathetic Republicans accomplished the following: Amendments to state constitutions went before the voters in 13 states, passing everywhere and greatly enhancing GOP turnout efforts, including in pivotal Ohio. In February 2004, President Bush (though with some reluctance) endorsed the Federal Marriage Amendment. In votes in the House and Senate the amendment fell well short of the two-thirds needed to send it to the states, but when the vast majority of Republicans voted for the amendment and the vast majority of Democrats against, the issue of same-sex marriage was further nationalized, taking the form of an explicit disagreement between the two parties.

In John Kerry's final debate with President Bush on October 13, 2004, the issue of same-sex marriage occasioned what most observers saw as Kerry's only serious misstep of the three debates—a misstep that arguably deflected momentum Kerry had achieved by his otherwise adroit performance in the debates. After a strong Bush answer to a question by moderator Bob Schieffer of CBS—an answer that outlined why a Kerry victory would surely result in judges who would make same-sex marriage the law of the land—an annoyed-looking Kerry said, "We're all God's children, Bob. And I think if you were to talk to Dick Cheney's daughter, who is a lesbian, she would tell you that she's being who she was, who she was born as."

This answer of Kerry's was to become the most widely remembered moment of the three debates. It came across as a cold, gratuitous use of Mary Cheney as a debating point. Unlike his running mate John Edwards in a similar exchange with Cheney in an earlier vice presidential debate, Kerry neglected to soften his attack with praise of the vice president and his wife for being supportive of their daughter, or even by referring to Mary Cheney by name. In context, it's hard to see Kerry's answer as anything other than an attempt to demonize Bush for daring to open ideological space between himself and Kerry on their approach to dealing with judicially decreed same-sex marriage.

> The final big reason social conservatism isn't going away is the most cold-bloodedly practical of all. Contrary to the stereotype of the GOP 'base' as a crazy aunt locked away in the attic, when social issues have come to the fore in *general* elections, Republicans, not Democrats, have invariably benefited.

On Election Day, the National Election Pool exit poll asked voters what issue (or issue cluster) influenced them the most. Of the choices provided, the surprise winner was Moral Values, running ahead of Economy/Jobs, Terrorism, and Iraq. Among the voters whose top concern was Moral Values—22 percent of the national vote—Bush bested Kerry 80 percent to 18 percent. So of all voters, 18 percent were Bush "Moral Values" supporters, 4 percent Kerry "Moral Values" supporters. In an election in which he carried the popular vote by just under 2.5 percentage points, Bush carried "Moral Values" voters by 14 percentage points, while losing all other voters combined by 11.5 percentage points. And Bush received 50.7 percent of the national vote in 2004—the first Republican popular majority since the elections of 1980, 1984, and 1988.

Put aside the stereotypes. Whatever its virtues or flaws, social conservatism isn't going away. It is not, and never was, the crazy aunt in the attic. It continues to be the essential building block of Republican presidential majorities. ♦

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At the Filling Station

Stirred, not shaken, by the drinking arts

BY CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

"How's your drink?" was, apparently, the cordial question asked of his guests by Frank Sinatra, who didn't like to think of anyone going short. "How's your glass?" was the equivalent question (and, later, book title) in the case of Kingsley Amis, whose domestic strategy later boiled down to telling his more favored friends that if they didn't have a full drink in their hands, it was their own bloody fault for not refilling without waiting to be asked.

Christopher Hitchens is a columnist for Vanity Fair.

That book was actually a quiz book, in which you could be asked "From what does Scotch receive its color?" or "What happens to a vintage port before and after bottling?" The answers were helpfully included at the end, often with a cheery wealth of extra detail, so the volume doubled as a guide and general adviser as well. But Amis also wrote two other drinkers-companion efforts, entitled *Every Day Drinking* and *On Drink*. (Interest declared: All these will soon be reissued in a handy single volume by Bloomsbury, with an introduction by your humble servant.)

How's Your Drink?
Cocktails, Culture, and the Art of Drinking Well
by Eric Felten
Agate Surrey, 200 pp., $20

Eric Felten doesn't write as well as Kingsley Amis, which is no disgrace (he is a jazz musician, an occupation for which Amis had a high regard) but he does have a feel for literature as it relates to booze, and he has been out there on our behalf and done an awful lot of homework. His book, which is a distillation, if I may put it like that, of his celebrated *Wall Street Journal* column of the same name, is by far the

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wittiest and the most comprehensive study of the subject since the author of *Lucky Jim* laid down his pen.

(By the way, a "Lucky Jim," according to Felten, is "3 oz. vodka, ¼ oz. dry vermouth, ½ oz. cucumber juice: Stir with ice and strain into a cocktail glass. Float a slice of unpeeled cucumber on the top." A bit herbivorous when compared to its namesake, but there you have it.)

It's always a good plan to see how an author handles a topic with which you are yourself familiar. So I began by looking up "Negroni": a favorite tipple of mine either on sunny days or in Mediterranean countries (it won't work in cold or gray conditions). I had always been authoritatively told that this cryptically effective cocktail—gin, Campari, and sweet vermouth—was so named because a certain Count Negroni once found himself with unexpected guests and with only those three ingredients at hand. Thanks to Felten, I now know a good deal better. It seems that Count Camillo Negroni was a drinker of Americanos—the cocktail, you may remember, that James Bond actually asks for in *Casino Royale*. But one day he tired of the blandness of campari, vermouth, and a swoosh of soda, and asked the barman at the Caffè Casoni in Florence—a man named Fosco Scarselli—to put a spike of gin in it. Like so many improvisations of genius, this was simple and easily emulated. (Though I should leave out the soda if I were you.)

Felten then goes on to elucidate the role played by the Negroni in the film version of Tennessee Williams's novel *The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone*, where it acts the part of accomplice to a gigolo, and in the novel version of Christopher Buckley's movie *Thank You For Smoking*, where in its vodka incarnation it acts as a prop and stay to the villainous lobbyist Nick Naylor. Buckley is quoted as saying that he himself has "been known to drink a [vodka] Negroni or two (but never three)" because "it signals a certain, shall we say, suavity, refinement, *je ne sais quoi*, sophistication, to say nothing of startling good looks and abundant masculinity. Unlike those girlie-men who drink Gin Negronis."

Well, everything had been going fine for me up until that point. But, secure enough in my own huskiness, I shall pardon young Buckley because he provides a segue—actually two segues—to an important subtext. This is the fraught question of cocktails and sex or, if you like, cocktails and gender.

His remark about one or two but never three has been, I hope, lifted from my own axiom about the relationship between martinis and female breasts. One is too few. Three is too many. Two seems somehow superbly right. His second observation, about the girlie factor, is something that greatly preoccupies Felten. When all is said, isn't there something very slightly *fussy* about all this mixing and shaking and measuring: something, perhaps, fractionally light in the loafers?

There is a sense in which the whole concept of the cocktail is an American one. As often as not, the cocktail bar in a decent European hotel will be called 'The American Bar.' The word cocktail itself is of American provenance, though rather vague in origin. And somehow, one can't picture the martini being evolved in any other culture.

Borrowing from an old *Esquire* distinction, he suggests that masculine cocktails involve whiskey whereas feminine ones "lean heavily on cream, fruit juices and crème de this-and-that." That seems fair enough, except that both he and Kingsley Amis (about whom there was nothing limp-wristed) demonstrate a high degree of affection for the "Irish Coffee" cocktail and the exquisitely careful means of making it. Of course whiskey, which Felten calls "that least feminine-seeming of spirits," is involved, so the honors here can be reckoned as about even.

Negronis to one side, and Americanos being as un-American as could be, there is still a sense in which the whole concept of the cocktail is an American one. As often as not, the cocktail bar in a decent European hotel will be called "The American Bar." The word cocktail itself is of American provenance, though rather vague in origin. I think the invention must have something to do with the distinctly American passion for plentiful ice: a commodity that was until fairly recently in niggardly supply in overseas bars and pubs. And somehow, one can't picture the martini being evolved in any other culture.

For any fooling around with the said and beloved martini—especially the sickly new tendency to put the "tini" suffix onto something insipid (like "appletini")—Felten has zero tolerance. His long section on the subject is taut and muscular and matter-of-fact. He reviews the work of the no-or-nearly-no vermouth school, uncharacteristically missing the chance to cite Luis Buñuel's advice to merely let a ray of sunshine through the vermouth bottle into the gin, but comes down in favor of a decent dollop and gives cogent reasons for his verdict as well as a very good selection of recipes and some hard thinking on the subject lifted (with attribution) from Bernard De Voto.

Occasionally his writing falls into a slight archness (I have always found the term "mixologist" for "bartender" to be wince-making) and he overuses terms like "so the story goes" and "legend has it," but in general this book is a superb guide to the world of the cocktail, and a handsome tribute to the bold society that produced it. ♦

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General Marshall at Harvard, 1947

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Man with a Plan

When America saved Europe—after World War II.

BY ERNEST W. LEFEVER

The Marshall Plan, which was launched exactly 60 years ago, was one of the wisest and most generous political achievements of the 20th century. It restored the shattered economies of war-ravaged Western Europe, revived democratic politics, and sowed the seeds for the fall of the Evil Empire.

The idea for this historic achievement was launched in a commencement speech by Secretary of State George C. Marshall at Harvard in June 1947, three months after President Truman's equally historic speech setting forth what became known as the Truman Doctrine, a dramatically new initiative to provide military aid to nations threatened by the Soviet Union, notably Greece and Turkey. The significance and consequences of the Marshall Plan cannot be understood apart from the Truman Doctrine and NATO, both created to serve the same overarching purpose of securing Western European states as allies in the struggle to contain Soviet expansion. Ten months after Marshall's speech, Truman launched the massive effort by signing the Foreign Assistance Act of 1948, declaring that it was "America's answer to the free world."

The Most Noble Adventure
The Marshall Plan and the Time When America Helped Save Europe
by Greg Behrman
Free Press, 464 pp., $27

Along with winning World War II, the Marshall Plan became the greatest achievement of the generation of which I am a card-carrying member. I didn't storm the Normandy beach, but as a civilian YMCA worker for three years in war-torn Western Europe, I saw close-up the physical devastation and spiritual despair wrought by Hitler. I walked through the rubble of Berlin, Dresden, Cologne, and a dozen other great cities. The massive destruction and the collapse of currencies brought Europe to the brink of disaster. No one wanted to repeat the grim aftermath of World War I.

I also observed Stalin's early, but less obvious, efforts to swallow up Eastern Europe and support Communist parties in Western Europe. Much of what I witnessed the author of this timely and fact-studded volume has had to learn from books and documents. Born in 1976, Greg Behrman reflects the enthusiasm of a newcomer to the momentous events that gave birth to the Marshall Plan, and introduces a new generation to the giants who wrought this miracle. He leaves few stones unturned in his long march through mountains of documents.

With 82 pages of footnotes, *The Most Noble Adventure* presents an endless stream of quotations and documents, but Behrman tends to slight historical analysis and context. He rightly gives prime attention to the three most influential Americans responsible for the Marshall Plan—Marshall, Truman, and Undersecretary of State Dean Acheson—and acknowledges the vital role of the Republican senator Arthur Vandenberg of Michigan, who rallied bipartisan congressional support. Two years after it was initiated, Vandenberg declared that the Marshall Plan had been "substantially responsible for reversing the corroding gloom which threatened Western Civilization," and that "might have brought the 'iron curtain' to the very rims of the Atlantic." Like most Americans at the time, I supported Harry Truman's Marshall Plan, NATO, and aid to Greece and Turkey. Truman's most conspicuous foreign ally in this drama was Winston Churchill, no longer British prime minister by that time, but whose prophetic "Iron Curtain" speech in March 1946 was considered too anti-Soviet by some pundits of the day.

By the end of the Marshall Plan program in 1951, it had financed $13 billion—roughly $100 billion in today's dollars—for the recovery of war-ravaged Europe, and Dean Acheson called it "one of the greatest and most honorable adventures in history." From the outset, the Plan faced great financial difficulties compounded by political intrigue. Europe had been ravaged from Norway to Sicily, and from Paris to Leningrad, and Britain was too exhausted to celebrate VE Day until a year after the war ended. The situation on the continent was far worse, especially in Germany, whose great cities, long centers of learning, science, art, and industry, had been flattened by Allied bombardment.

Early on, Truman explored the feasi-

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bility of Soviet participation in the Plan, but Stalin saw it as an attempt to subvert Moscow's political designs in Eastern Europe. (One pro-Soviet Yugoslav leader called the Marshall Plan "a dagger pointed at Moscow.") Despite Stalin's tightening grip on Eastern Europe, several states, notably Czechoslovakia, at first entertained hopes that the Iron Curtain might be lifted so Prague could participate in the plan. Sadly, this small nation, which had enjoyed a brief experience of democracy between Versailles and Munich, suffered a tragic blow when Stalin prohibited it from receiving Marshall aid.

"When it rains in Moscow, Prague puts up an umbrella," a Czech friend told me in 1948.

Most Western European governments enthusiastically accepted the Marshall Plan. But predictably, the French had reservations. Paris feared that it would promote German recovery over that of France, and such apprehension increased when the 1948 West German currency devaluation gave the new Deutschmark a competitive position in world markets.

The arrival of Marshall Plan ships in European ports infuriated Stalin and the Western European Communist parties. In June 1948, to counter growing American influence, especially in West Germany, Stalin blockaded West Berlin, an enclave located 120 miles inside Soviet-occupied East Germany, with the hope of expelling U.S. forces from the city. Truman responded with a massive airlift of food and fuel. In May 1949 Stalin lifted the blockade. Truman's heroism did much to assure the success of the Marshall Plan, but further fueled Moscow's imperial designs on Eastern Europe.

For three momentous years the Marshall Plan, despite bickering among European participants, achieved what it set out to do: rescue wartorn Europe from economic and political collapse, and restore a sound currency and stable political environment for NATO. Without the Marshall Plan, writes Behrman, West European statesmen would have been hard-pressed to curb the "internal communist threat, political violence and the external Soviet threat." ♦

William Faulkner at West Point, 1962

UNITED STATES MILITARY ACADEMY AT WEST POINT ARCHIVES

The Write Stuff

The hunger for literature among student officers.

BY MARK BAUERLEIN

In *Patton*, the 1970 film, one of the intriguing traits of the general as played by George C. Scott unfolds not in front of that mammoth American flag, or at a party with a lumpish Red Army general, but on a quiet grassy lane in the hills of Tunisia. On a somber afternoon during the North Africa campaign, Patton directs his jeep onto a knoll dotted with ruins, then steps down to resurrect an ancient scene to Omar Bradley (played by Karl Malden) as trumpets echo in the distance.

"It was here," Patton says. "The battlefield was here." He means the Battle of Zama, where in 202 B.C. Roman legions under Scipio routed Hannibal's Carthaginians and ended the Second Punic War.

"I was there," Patton mutters before reciting lines of his own creation on "the pomp and toils of war . . . the age-old strife . . . when I fought in many guises and many names."

The scene borders on *kitsch*, but Patton's historical sense and literary voice save it. They signify, too, a larger point. In the midst of a major military action, Patton still feels the presence of the past and resorts to poetry to express it. For him, the finer arts complement the martial arts, the general and the humanist are one.

In *Soldier's Heart*, Elizabeth Samet's memoir of 10 years teaching English at West Point, *Patton* is, she remarks, a favorite of the cadets, and the same combination happens over and over. She arrived in 1997, a fresh Ph.D. from

Soldier's Heart
Reading Literature Through Peace and War at West Point
by Elizabeth D. Samet
Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 272 pp., $23

Mark Bauerlein, professor of English at Emory, is the author, most recently, of Negrophobia: A Race Riot in Atlanta, 1906.

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Yale (Harvard B.A., an all-girls prep school in Boston before that), uncertain how she might fit in. Straight off she saw that "a West Point class is not the gung-ho, red-state monolith an outsider might expect." Cadets come from all regions, income groups, and ideologies—some carrying on a family tradition of service, some whose parents protested the Vietnam war. Most of all, belying the Rambo stereotype, they like novels and poems and plays. In class they read *The Iliad*, *Beowulf*, *War and Peace*, World War I poetry, and also Pope's *Essay on Man*, Dickens's *Bleak House*, Matthew Arnold's "Literature and Science," the curious lyrics of Wallace Stevens, Diderot's plan for the *Encyclopédie*.

Out of class, they keep at it. Lieutenants in Iraq who took her course three years earlier write back to ask about her current syllabus. Another stationed in Korea tells her, "Someone once told me that 'the most important book you will ever read is the first one after your graduation.' I wish I could remember what it was—I have done more reading since graduation than I would have ever thought possible." Still another writes from Mosul, "I have been rolling through books here at a pretty steady clip," and when he returns to the States, he reports, guiltily, that his reading has slipped.

Samet attributes these young people's literary fervor precisely to their combat future. While freshmen down in Manhattan at Columbia and NYU think about jobs and paychecks they'll secure after graduation, and hook-ups they make before it, cadets have a rigorous regimented existence in class and out, and they know they will assume command of 30 men and women when it's over, probably in a hot zone. The prospect throws them into hard questions of life and death, duty and sacrifice, courage and leadership, and they probe great works to figure them out. Samet's chapters ramble from episode to episode, sprinkling reflections on the war on terror, Guantánamo and Abu Ghraib, and her own frequent place as "the Only Woman in the Room" (a chapter title), but the plebe readers are what hold the book together.

All of them, Samet included, "feel a palpable pressure to consider every moment's practical and moral weight." The pressure magnifies the import of Macbeth contemplating the murder of Duncan, Penelope waiting for her husband, Stevens's "Oh! Blessed rage for order"—Samet doesn't have to convince them to respect Shakespeare, Homer, and the rest. The war has done that already.

To anyone who teaches English elsewhere, the enthusiasm is wondrous. One semester, a trio of plebes won't let her alone: "Around whatever corner we met, we would immediately resume discussion about a point left unfinished in class, about the books they were reading." Compare them to students in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), a massive annual study of college kids. Asked in 2006 how often they talk to their professors outside of class, fully 43 percent of first-year students answered "Never," while 39 percent gave a middling "Sometimes." While Samet's students beg her to recommend books, when NSSE asked freshmen how many books they had read on their own in the previous year, 24 percent answered "None" while 55 percent opened a measly one-to-four.

So much for the anti-intellectualism of military cadets. Many other myths about them, too, explode in Samet's portraits. When she gets the job at West Point, a Yale professor informs her, "You'll humanize them." But when she thinks back upon her Harvard/Yale years, she finds them an induction into "doubt and disenchantment," whereas "West Point won me back to a kind of idealism." She finds little sexism in the place, either: "Being a woman is immaterial to many of my colleagues." And while the 1960s counterculture "helped to make the American soldier come to seem a rather strange and exotic creature to many civilians: an anachronistic conformist," Samet encounters "outrageous, uncompromising individuals" and "arch-rebels," and alumni remain "concerned that cadets' minds be exercised with sufficient vigor."

How far the literary virtues of West Pointers extend through the armed forces is an open question, but the institutional commitment to books runs deep. During World War II, for instance, the Army distributed more than 100 million volumes to the troops. Samet's father remembers the Armed Services Editions, pocket-sized paperbacks of classics and potboilers ranging from Zane Grey to Edna St. Vincent Millay. Today, the Army Library Program maintains kiosks in Iraq, Bosnia, and Afghanistan, along with more than 125 libraries on bases around the world.

The commitment goes back to John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, who authorized the founding of the United States Military Academy in 1802. Samet quotes Adams on one rationale: "I was too well informed that most of the officers [in the Army] were deficient in reading: and I wished to turn the Minds of such as were capable of it, to that great Source of Information." Jefferson thought the officers of the time inclined to aristocracy, and he hoped the curriculum would instruct them in republican principles. Both of them would agree with the British general William Francis Butler, whose summary opinion about the education of soldiers Samet quotes approvingly:

> The nation that will insist upon drawing a broad line of demarcation between the fighting man and the thinking man is liable to find its fighting done by fools and its thinking by cowards.

This explains why the West Point years have affected Samet so deeply. She pledges to cross that line of demarcation, and while her colleagues at Ivies and state universities ponder at length their role as teachers in a post-9/11 world (always an adversarial role), Samet and West Point have had to act on that question daily from September 12 onward, and they've produced an ironic outcome. Literature, history, and philosophy matter, and they do so less to students and teachers in the cozy quads of the college campus, ensconced in libraries and symposia, than they do to bedraggled, bored, and anxious officers sweating it out in the desert. ♦

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Earth to Newt

A Gingrich revolution on behalf of the environment.

BY **G. TRACY MEHAN III**

Have you heard the one about the politician and the zookeeper? Newt Gingrich, former speaker of the House, and Terry L. Maple, former president and CEO of Zoo Atlanta, currently with the Palm Beach Zoo, have written a manifesto aimed at restoring the earth through cooperation, entrepreneurship, technology, and partnerships between and among governments, business corporations, and private philanthropy.

A Contract with the Earth
by Newt Gingrich
and Terry L. Maple
Foreword by Edward O. Wilson
Johns Hopkins, 256 pp., $20

A Contract with the Earth opens with an appreciative foreword by the Pulitzer Prize-winning Harvard biologist Edward O. Wilson, followed by a passionate preface by the speaker himself. Gingrich states that he and Maple share an environmental philosophy which is derived "from an enduring respect for wildlife in all its splendid diversity. We are personally diminished by the loss of each and every species or essential habitat that cannot resist extinction." He is concerned that "our failure to resolve serious environmental challenges will compromise the lives of our children and our grandchildren."

Gingrich's love for wildlife, like that of Theodore Roosevelt and the former conservative senator from New York James L. Buckley (brother of William F.), is personal and deeply rooted. The speaker is a staunch defender of the Endangered Species Act, "an excellent example of the value of civility, consultation, and collaboration," and he believes that recent changes in the implementation of the law "have produced good results, a function of shared values and democratic ideals." Gingrich and Maple argue that the Endangered Species Act may be "America's best environmental success story"—a claim which will certainly get them a few emails from conservative bloggers.

Compare Gingrich's defense of the Act to James Buckley's in his recent memoir, *Gleanings from an Unplanned Life*:

> As for the protection of critical ecosystems and the species that depend on them, one would think that conservatives in particular would understand Edmund Burke's caution that "temporary possessors and life-rentors [sic] should not think it among their rights to . . . commit waste on the inheritance [and] leave to those who come after them a ruin instead of a habitation." As I reminded *National Review* readers in a 1978 defense of the Endangered Species Act, a Wood Thrush's haunting song may have no monetary value, but it enriches countless lives.

Gingrich insists that "adversarial politics has prevented a strategic consensus from driving our nation's environmental vision." The environmental issue, he says, "transcends politics." The speaker eschews stereotypes: "It is quite possible to be a green conservative; indeed, a conservative philosophy is highly compatible with the mainstream, or entrepreneurial, environmentalism that Terry and I advocate."

Gingrich and Maple claim that something should be done to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, "but our government has not yet demonstrated the necessary leadership to create a workable alternative to Kyoto. Our country needs to get back to the table." They also embrace a "compelling environmental vision" in which industrial societies wean themselves from their dependence on fossil fuels: "Strong leadership is the antidote to our reliance on fossil fuels; it is time to seize this indisputably big idea—a turning point for wiser, sustainable use of our natural resources," they write. "Like a good stock portfolio, it is becoming increasingly clear that a diversified energy portfolio is a timely idea." And national security necessitates this migration away from fossil fuels.

A Contract with the Earth is strong in outlining the tremendous proliferation of government/business environmental partnerships and the expansion of strategic, collaborative philanthropy on behalf of conservation.

The Wildlife Conservation Society of New York, for example, has established an endowment of $500 million to fund more than a hundred field conservation projects on four continents, and support conservation operations within its five zoos and aquaria. While Gingrich and Maple praise the Nature Conservancy—the most visible, and largest, private land trust in the world–they might have also noted that private land trusts in the United States now protect 37 *million* acres, an area equal to 16-and-a-half times the size of Yellowstone National Park, as determined by the Land Trust Alliance in its recent census. Gingrich and Maple see a new kind of entrepreneurship arising that will generate new products, services, and technologies to save energy, restore the land, and clean up pollution. Corporations such as Wal-Mart can transform an entire supply chain by demanding environmentally friendly products for their customers. Costa Rica has developed a huge ecotourism industry, thereby creating incentives and the means for continued protection of its rain forests.

To call the authors optimists would be an understatement. Not for them the darker musings of, say, Wendell Berry; they aim to overcome political strife, transform difficult trade-offs into win-win situations, and save the planet. ♦

G. Tracy Mehan III is a principal in the Cadmus Group, an environmental consulting firm, and served in the EPA under George W. Bush.

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Somerset Maugham at play, 1954

GETTY IMAGES

Where the Auction Is

The game of bridge and the human condition.

BY DAVID GUASPARI

Harold Stirling Vanderbilt, yachtsman and socialite, invented contract bridge on a cruise ship waiting to transit the Panama Canal. The year was 1925, and by the end of the decade bridge had become—for all segments of society, high, low, and Hollywood—the most popular card game in America.

The Marx Brothers played enthusiastically, as did Dwight Eisenhower, Wilt Chamberlain, and Mahatma Gandhi—though never, I believe, at the same table. So did James Bond, who cheats the villainous Sir Hugo Drax in a high stakes game at Blades Club. Blades is modeled on the world's oldest bridge club, the Portland, to which Ian Fleming belonged. (Had Drax been a true expert, he'd have known the deck was stacked when he picked up his cards and saw the Duke of Cumberland hand, a famous swindle from the days of whist.)

The Backwash Squeeze and Other Improbable Feats
A Newcomer's Journey into the World of Bridge
by Edward McPherson
HarperCollins, 368 pp., $23.95

In April 2005 things looked different. When Edward McPherson proposed to write a book on bridge, Jeff Bayone, part owner of the Manhattan Bridge Club, told him he was nuts. Bayone teaches poker, too, because poker is what's hot. Celebrities no longer play bridge. They play poker, "probably because they're nitwits." Poker is easy to follow on TV and the cable networks can't seem to get enough of shaved heads and wraparound shades and the soul-stirring drama of money changing hands. *Championship Bridge with Charles Goren*, featuring four decorously dressed adults who played for the equivalent of matchsticks, went off the air in 1964.

Now, says Jeff Bayone, bridge is dying. A younger generation of players "DOES. NOT. EXIST." The reason? "It takes thirty minutes to teach Texas Hold'em, and in an hour you can be as good as fifty percent of the people playing the game. That would take years of study in bridge."

All of which made McPherson's project admirably countercultural. And of course, James McManus had already done the poker bestseller, *Positively Fifth Street*. Advance publicity for *The Backwash Squeeze* treats *Fifth Street* as its fraternal twin, a comparison misleading in every possible way—most importantly because McManus, a lifelong amateur player, writes about a mania from within its grip, while McPherson is a novice under no compulsion to play bridge, a bemused anthropologist touring the game's subcultures.

That territory is varied. "Rubber bridge" can be played for simple social fellowship or (at tony private venues such as the Portland or New York's Regency Whist Club) for serious money. Four players partner one another in turn, which demands flexibility and a "table presence" attuned to each player's strengths and weaknesses. "Duplicate bridge" is the format for tournaments, which are mainly contests for glory and rankings. It reduces the luck of the deal: Partnerships are fixed, and the hands are dealt once and circulated, to be played repeatedly by different competitors. A pair's score on any hand is determined by how well it did in comparison with those who held the same cards.

Increasingly, both forms are played online, where one might find oneself at a virtual table with enthusiasts Bill Gates (screen name Chalengr) or Warren Buffett (T-Bone).

Accordingly, McPherson seeks out not only experts but also ordinary amateurs, with an emphasis on spunky old ladies. Prominent among those is Tina,

David Guaspari writes from Ithaca, New York.

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an octogenarian in his beginners class who became his regular playing partner. Reserved, intelligent, with a dry sense of humor, a season's subscriber to several off-off Broadway theaters, Tina is the sort of person about whom there seems always something new and surprising to be learned. The book's slender narrative chronicles their growing friendship.

"You're the only person in the world," she once says, "who knows this much about me." That story concludes with their trip to Chicago, full of trepidation, to enter a beginner's event at the North American Bridge Championships.

Some of McPherson's anthropology is clichéd. Do we need yet another comic take on flabby vacationers in a tacky American tourist town? And vignettes of "ruthless" old ladies at an afternoon tournament and "brilliant" play by the author's friend's nonagenarian grandmother raise the question: How would he know?

But his descriptions of the stratosphere—the money game at fancy clubs or at London's raffish TGR, the tournament circuit and its stars—are absorbing. He presents the professional Michael Polowan, for example, as an artist for art's sake. Polowan rarely plays for cash and never hustles—always making sure that the other players in a money game know just who he is. His living comes primarily from fees for partnering others in tournaments, but he deliberately limits that income because too much time with weaker players takes the edge off his game.

Bob Hamman, widely regarded as the best player in the world, is CEO of an appealingly odd company called Sports Contest Associates. Its specialty is providing insurance for blockbuster promotions, such as a sports arena's offering some randomly chosen fan $1 million if he can sink a half-court shot. The underwriting procedures, Hamman says, involve "some adjustments, some computations, and some unscientific wild-ass guesses."

Do not infer from Hamman's profession that bridge is a contest of actuarial skills. "The percentages" are easily learned, and won't get you out of the novice class. Bridge is a game of inference and judgment. Top players develop an astonishing skill at deducing the lie of the unseen cards—not from the fidgets and tics that poker players call "tells" but from chains of inference such as: If *this* guy had *those* cards, would he have played *that* one given what he knew *then*—or could he anticipate that I would ask this very question and therefore, to deceive me, played *then* what *would otherwise have been* the wrong card?

It takes guts to "go against the field" and base bold plays on such elaborate counterfactuals—and to weather the occasional catastrophes that result if they prove to be misjudgments. When asked to name his most memorable hands, Hamman demurs, because the ones that stand out are "the shipwrecks."

In 1999, Zia Mahmood offered a million dollars for any computer bridge program that could beat him, followed by his clobbering of the seven that were tried.

Zia Mahmood is perhaps the most famous world-class bridge player, and certainly the most presentable: a charming egotist, always elegantly dressed, often surrounded by female kibitzers. Of all the top players, says McPherson, Zia has the best time. He made a splash in 1981 by leading a Pakistani team of complete unknowns into the finals of the world championship. In 1999, the mainstream press noticed his offer of a million-dollar prize for any computer program that could beat him, followed by his clobbering of the seven that were tried. That outcome was never in doubt, and an understanding of computer chess shows why.

There are two approaches to chess: brute force, following out untold millions of possible lines of play (I do this, then he does that, then I do that, then …), or imagination and insight—which among other benefits, reduce to a very few the lines of play worth considering. Humans play chess with imagination and insight, and computers attempting to mimic that have always failed. Computers have succeeded by, in a sense, playing a different game. But there's only one way to play bridge, which relies heavily on concealing, revealing, and discovering hidden information.

Is bridge dying? How does one market the world's "deepest and most difficult card game"? The American Contract Bridge League has a lame website for kids. Bill Gates and Warren Buffett have stumped up a million bucks to fund bridge clubs in middle schools but found limited interest—in part, it seems, because of prudish panic at the very thought of card playing. The Cavendish Invitational, a high-stakes money tournament begun in 1975, has been Las Vegasized. Its premiere event, the Cavendish Pairs, begins with an auction to buy one of the invited partnerships ($12,500 minimum) who then play a three-day tournament. The million or so in auction money is pooled and paid out to the owners of the highest finishers.

And just what is a "backwash squeeze," anyway? You'll have to find out for yourself. McPherson quotes, for comic effect, the opening lines of a technical description and gives himself a pass on understanding it. Let's not bother our purty little heads about *that*.

Bridge will not disappear, but how lamentable if it were marginalized by its virtues—by difficulty and depth. In 2004 the *Washington Post* did report ambiguous news about its potential comeback among the hip set, "along with other retro favorites such as bowling shirts, TV dinners and kitten heels."

McPherson and Tina fared poorly in Chicago. Despite that showing, and the hellish travel foul-ups they suffered (flight delays and lost reservations), Tina declares, "I'd do it again."

A good decision; it's a beautiful game. And after I finished *The Backwash Squeeze*, I went to my shelf of bridge books and, for the first time in 30 years, opened one. ♦

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'David Before the Ark of the Covenant,' ca. 1726, by Giovanni Battista Pittoni

ARTE & IMMAGINI SRL / CORBIS

Beyond Betar

How the Jews have adapted to history.

BY DAVID GELERNTER

This is a study in compression. In less than 200 pages Ruth Wisse chronicles the Jewish nation from antiquity to the struggles of today's Israeli state (or "the Zionist entity," as it is affectionately known around the neighborhood). She tells her story with authority and restrained passion. But her narrative is merely a foundation for the series of related theses that stand forth like pinnacles on a medieval castle, banners flying.

Jews and Power
by Ruth Wisse
Schocken, 256 pp., $19.95

When Rome drove the Jews out of Israel after the defeat (at Betar in 135) of the last Zionist liberation movement until modern times, the newly homeless nation developed a novel national strategy. Although the strategy was inspired by and intertwined with the Jewish religion, it was (says Wisse) a political strategy—a method of organizing Jewish communities internally and of managing their "foreign relations" with the local Gentile powers. Its characteristics were a simple but serviceable participatory democracy within the community, and a defense policy based on brains instead of arms. In fact, argues Wisse, Jews dismissed from their culture the whole idea of military power: "The Jewish Diaspora," she writes, "is one of history's boldest political experiments, an experiment as novel as the idea of monotheism itself."

A big claim.

Jewish communities played the man and not the ball, adjusting their tactics frequently to the whims of local and national authorities. Sometimes they had no sense, but their sensibility was finely tuned. Their matchless capacity to read their Gentile neighbors, together with their fixed resolve to survive as a nation, brought the Jews (if only just barely) through 2,000 years of brutal persecution and made them what they are today: the senior nation of the Western world.

Wisse calls this a strategy of accommodation, and describes two tragic consequences that must be set against its (relative) success.

As European nations gradually liberated their Jewish communities from the segregationist laws that shut them out of Gentile society, the strategy of accommodation shot Jews straight to the top. Sensitive antennae and advanced survival skills allowed Jews to excel in commerce, finance, and virtually every other field they entered. But Jewish success merely created a new and deadlier form of Jew-hatred. The Roman Catholic Church used to hate the Jewish religion, but the new anti-Semites who crawled out of the cracks in late 19th-century Europe hated the Jews themselves, and schemed to use Jew-hatred as a battering ram to demolish the liberal order with which Jewish liberation was associated.

Wisse adds an important truth to the history of modern anti-Semitism: Not all anti-liberal political parties were anti-Semitic, "*but there were no anti-Semitic parties that were not innately anti-liberal* [her italics]."

The accommodationist state of mind also had catastrophic results for Zionism. Jewish emigrants to Palestine in the late 19th and early 20th centuries foresaw a benevolent new society living peacefully with its Arab neighbors, raising Arab and Jewish living standards simultaneously. Theodor Herzl, founder of modern Zionism, envisioned just this kind of society in the utopian novel that appeared in English translation as "Hill of Spring," *Tel Aviv*. Only with stunned and belated bewilderment did Jews returning to Zion come to realize that their Arab brothers wanted them gone and, preferably, dead. The 1929 slaughter of unarmed Jews at Hebron

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and at Safed finally induced Jewish Palestine to begin (in defiance of the British authorities) to organize seriously for armed self-defense.

Jewish accommodationism, Wisse convincingly argues, remains to this day a disaster for Zionism, and continues to feed the Jewish delusion that their Arab enemies merely want peace and fair play, like the Jews themselves. This willful delusion was the basis of the Oslo agreements between Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin and terrorist-in-chief Yasser Arafat of the PLO. In fact, "Oslo triggered an immediate escalation of terror not only against Israel but against the West," Wisse notes. And she quotes a journalist in the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* who wrote, in 2006, that Israelis "deserved" the bloodbath triggered by Oslo: "We earned it honestly as a nation of gullible fools."

Wisse's discussion of Stalin's direct involvement in the origins of anti-Zionism is a powerful part of her argument; so, too, are the connections she traces between the Nazi and Soviet governments and the growth of Arab violence against Jews. These facts are no secret; but the Western world (not excluding the American Jewish community) is blissfully ignorant and needs frequent reminding.

Some will argue with Wisse's thesis, at least in part. Jews in the Diaspora continued to remember their military heritage (classical Rome regarded the Jews as "ferocious") with at least guarded respect. The three greatest heroes of the Hebrew Bible—Abraham, Moses, and King David—are all described as military leaders; David, the greatest soldier of all, was and is the most beloved of all. Rabbi Akiba, the most important thinker of the Talmud, was a dedicated supporter of Bar Kokhba's rebellion (which led to the final defeat at Betar). Of course, David is beloved above all as the psalmist, Israel's greatest (and Western history's most influential) poet. Judaism honors David's combination of military and poetic genius: One of its most frequently repeated prayers expresses the hope that God will bless Israel with "*oz v'shalom*," power *and* peace.

Wisse's book will occasion other arguments, too. Does accommodationism account for post-liberation Jewish brilliance in art, science, and scholarship, or only in commerce? Do Arabs hate Jews because their leaders stand to gain (just as the Nazis did) by giving the masses a license to hate, steal, and kill? And because the Jews seemed like European colonialists, whom the Arabs hated already?

Clearly both explanations are valid, but there's a third possibility as well: By offering help to the indigenous Arabs instead of *requesting* help, the Zionists offended a proud people. A character in Henry James explains to a friend why he might succeed where she had failed in getting acquainted with some difficult old maids: "There's all the difference: I went to confer a favour and you'll go to ask one. If they're proud you'll be on the right side." The Arabs who first encountered the modern Zionists were immensely proud; after all, pride was all they had.

If *Jews and Power* is arguable at some points, Wisse's authority, passion, and dignity make it compelling throughout. When she refers now and then to incidents in her own life, the effect is powerful, like an actor coming suddenly downstage to address the audience out of character and from the heart: "Having fled with my family to North America as a stateless refugee (the ship that brought us from Lisbon to New York in 1940 was torpedoed on its return voyage), I know the brunt of involuntary displacement." Often her writing is eloquent in its plain-spokenness. (Among the great monotheistic religions, "Judaism is unique in allowing anyone to become a Jew without insisting that everyone should become a Jew.")

To encompass in under 200 pages the long history of the Jewish nation, along with an eloquent and novel commentary, sounds like an impossible Houdini-act. But Wisse has pulled it off. ♦

Weepers Creepers

It's Ian McEwan's novel on steroids.

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

After the enormous success of their film versions of E.M. Forster's *Room With a View* and *Howards End*, the director James Ivory and the producer Ismail Merchant became the first and last names in high-end literary adaptation, at first for good and then, ultimately, for ill. Movie partisans whose tastes tend to the sensational and pyrotechnical—and who happen to dominate the world of film reviewing—loved to speak slightingly of "Merchant-Ivory costume dramas" which were, they said, so concerned with being of unimpeachable taste that they were lifeless and bloodless.

Atonement
Directed by Joe Wright

Though this charge had some merit in a few Merchant-Ivory examples (*The Bostonians* and *The Remains of the Day*, in particular), it was wrongheaded when it came to their best films. What they and their screenwriter, Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, actually accomplished was the opposite of bloodlessness. They managed to break literary adaptation out of the static *Masterpiece Theatre* straitjacket without dumbing down the works they were representing on film. At their best, Merchant-Ivory movies

John Podhoretz, editorial director of Commentary, *is* The Weekly Standard*'s movie critic.*

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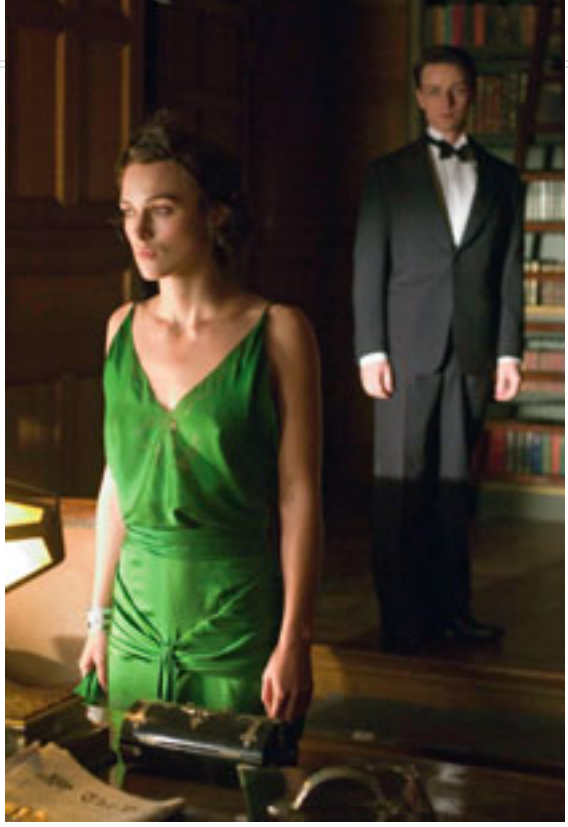
suffuse the screen with the wit, passion, and urgency of the novels from which they derive, and in so doing, they make the point that a work of literature need not be a diorama but can be a powerfully immediate and uniquely engaging thing.

Thanks chiefly to the Merchant-Ivory influence, the 1990s saw a renaissance of literary adaptation, with a wonderful *Sense and Sensibility*, a tough-minded *Persuasion*, and a remarkably clear *Wings of the Dove*. Even Martin Scorsese got into the act with a marvelous rendition of Edith Wharton's *The Age of Innocence*, a film that merits a second and even third viewing. All these films manage to be faithful to their distinguished sources and purely cinematic at the same time.



Keira Knightley, James McAvoy

FOCUS FEATURES

Joe Wright, a British director, came out with a version of *Pride and Prejudice* two years ago that is not quite up to those standards; his long-maned Darcy is far too much like the romance-novel characters he inspired and his model-thin Lizzie Bennet too much of an ingénue. But it's a pretty good movie nonetheless. The same cannot be said, however, for Wright's adaption of *Atonement*, Ian McEwan's rapturously reviewed 2002 novel, which is one of the most exhaustingly overwrought movies I've ever seen. So intent is Wright (in collaboration with screenwriter Christopher Hampton) on bringing McEwan's extremely literary work to cinematic life that it's as though he attached jumper cables to the book and attached the other ends to a nuclear reactor. Scenes are run forwards and backwards and played three times over. The musical score pounds at you. Sequences intended to express a delirious romanticism are drippy to the point of self-parody.

McEwan's novel is about the consequences of an act of hysteria. Wright's movie *is* an act of hysteria.

In *Atonement*, which begins at a stately English country manor in 1935, a post-collegiate couple fall in love on the same day a teenage girl is molested. The two events are conflated in a tragic and awful way by the protagonist, a 13-year-old budding writer named Briony who is witness to both events, misunderstands both, and arranges a monstrous punishment. The punishment destroys her family and haunts Briony until she seeks to expiate her sin by becoming a nurse in London a few months into World War II. In the meantime, the young lovers find each other again until they are separated by war, and their ultimate fate is not revealed until Briony is an old novelist nearing death at the turn of the new millennium.

McEwan writes a gorgeous and controlled prose, transporting even when it is foreboding. To read *Atonement* is to be taken in hand by a master in complete command of his craft, so much so that its celebrated shock of an ending—in which McEwan deconstructs the book's climax in the space of two sentences on its penultimate page—seems as inevitable as the fate of Oedipus. (Only afterwards, upon second or third reflection, does the ending reveal itself as a peculiar and entirely unnecessary cheat, reducing his tale into a novel-length version of Ambrose Bierce's "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge.")

Wright wants to duplicate the power and beauty of McEwan's prose, and his film is lush and lavish, beautifully photographed and decorated. But where McEwan is smooth, Wright is jumpy. McEwan is one of those writers who achieves a perfect omniscient invisibility, even when writing in the first person. Wright wants you to know he's directing, especially in the movie's most egregious sequence: a five-minute single take of the British army trapped on the beach in Dunkirk in 1940. What is supposed to be a portrait of feverish despair turns, instead, into a fun-house ride with a Steadicam. Far from being invisible, Wright turns himself into the movie's star.

Atonement features two heartbreakingly good performances. One is by an actor named James McAvoy, whose brash good looks are reminiscent of the young Hugh Grant but who brings a depth and gravity to his character that Grant has always lacked. The other is the work of Romola Garai, who has worked steadily over the past few years in blonde-bombshell roles. Here she subdues her sexiness to play the tormented 18-year-old Briony, who is trying to understand and come to grips with the damage she has done. For reasons I don't understand, critics are heaping praise on the sullen and sunken Saoirse Ronan, who plays Briony at 13, and on Vanessa Redgrave, Briony at 67, who serves as the narrator of the movie's final few minutes. But it is Garai who emerges from this film as a potentially major actress. (Not so Keira Knightley, whose turn as the movie's romantic lead is unmemorable except for the fact that you could fit a wedding ring around her waist.)

Atonement is worth seeing for McAvoy and Garai alone. And certainly, if you've never read the novel, you might find yourself stunned by the ending. But what this movie demonstrates is just how miraculous the best Merchant-Ivory movies really are, and how unjust so many people were in taking the care and wisdom with which those films were made for granted. ♦

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"When I was a kid, we used to drive on the Beltway past the big Mormon temple outside Washington."
—Maureen Dowd,* The New York Times, *December 9

The Mormon temple outside Washington opened in 1974, when Maureen Dowd was 22 years old.

THE NEW YORK TIMES **OP-ED** WEDNESDAY, D

MAUREEN DOWD

Grandpa Dowd And Me

WASHINGTON

People ask me where I learned to tell stories, and my answer is always the same: It's something I inherited from my Grandpa Dowd, who landed in Washington after a harrowing journey from County Cork in 1910, and sold rags along the Beltway when it was still a snarky dirt road.

Like many ambitious immigrants of his generation, he sank every penny he earned into the stock market, and lost it all in 1929 when the dot.com bubble burst. That disaster made him a stalwart Democrat—as well as a lifelong Arizona Diamondbacks fan—and fortified his sense that life, especially for the snarky Irish, can be tough.

He liked to talk about another star-crossed Irishman, Ernest Hemingway, who said that "the second acts in American life are different from you and me." To which the barrel-chested, *uber*-macho F. Scott Fitzgerald replied, in his snarky manner, "Yes, they have more bananas." My mother was a member of the first women's class at Bryn Mawr and never forgot the day Herbert Hoover showed up to tell them to forget college, get married, and buy his vacuum cleaners.

The trouble with Rudy Giuliani is that he reminds most women of another, less snarky, more lovable, Rudolph: the red-nosed reindeer. When the Kennedy Center opened in 1959, my parents took me to meet him there by telling me that the Spice Girls were performing, those same Spice Girls whose "Girl Power" mantra inspired one gorgeous, brilliant, red-headed seven-year-old named Maureen who frightened the boys at Sacred Heart with her rapier wit and incisive

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